


Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine \$5.99

Ani DiFranco

Oh Susanna

Mariza

# PENGUIN EGGS



## Horace X

The Paperboys • Son of Dave • Rae Spoon  
The Silver Hearts • Ron Hynes • Chris Smither  
New Lost City Ramblers • Ray Bonneville  
London, Ontario: 1969-80 • Pieta Brown

Issue No. 19  
Autumn 2003



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# IN FINE RECORD STORES ACROSS CANADA

"Stern's has become an essential resource." Folk Roots

**Salif Keita**  
"Soro"



**Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens**  
"Thokozile"



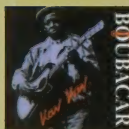
**Cheb Khaled & Saby Boutella**  
"Kutché"



**Sam Mangwana**  
"Rumba Music"



**Boubacar Traoré**  
"Kar Kar"



**orchestra baobab**  
"bamba"



**Miriam Makeba**  
"The Guinea Years"



**Africando**  
All Stars  
"Mandali"



**"Tea in Marrakech"**



**Kandia Kouyate**  
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## Cover story

26...They took their name from a Balkan dance and an African-American civil rights activist. Initially heroes to lonely math students, Horace X's glorious global amalgamation of disparate musical sources now clammers effortlessly across continents.

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Cover Photo: By Frank Gasparik

## Quotable

"He checked me out in a mirror to make sure I wasn't a vampire – they have no reflections – then mostly we discussed my dog who was named Scratch after him; though, I'm not sure he was that impressed by the notion."

– Mark Russell of Horace X meets his hero, legendary dub producer Lee "Scratch" Perry.

"I feel like there is really a sickness of the American soul, that has been bred into us through the propaganda of the TV, and this mutation from citizens to consumers, this complete disillusionment and detachment from the process of democracy."

– Ani DiFranco

## Sheet Music

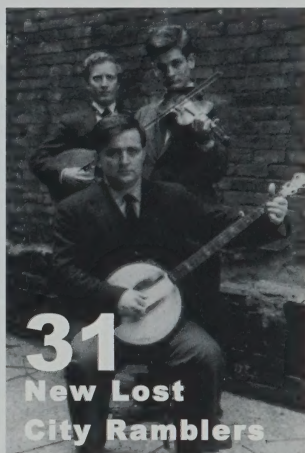
57 . . . The Oldest Man In The World. – By Grit Laskin



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Photo of Laura Smith



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**UPCOMING RELEASES: DON ROOKE (of the HENRY'S) • JENNY WHITELEY • JIM BYRNES • CHRIS TARRY**

**GREAT UNCLES OF THE REVOLUTION CANADA TOUR**

Aug 31 - Rimouski, QC - Jazz Festival  
 Sept 5 - Toronto - Hugh's Room  
 Sept 7 - Guelph, ONT - Jazz Festival  
 Sept 7 - Vancouver, BC - The Celler  
 Sept 9 - Calgary, AB - Karma  
 Sept 11 - Medicine Hat, AB - Black Box Theatre  
 Sept 12 - Winnipeg, MB - French Cultural Centre

Sept 13 - Fredericton, NB - Harvest Jazz & Blues  
 Sept 15 - Antigonish, Halifax, NS - St. FX University  
 Sept 17 - Ottawa, ONT - National Library  
 Sept 18 - London, ONT - St. Aidan's Church  
 Sept 19 - London, ONT - UWU  
 Sept 20 - Kingston, ONT - The Old Schoolhouse  
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 Oct 01 - Guelph - International Music Day w/ Martin Tielli & Christine Fellows  
 Oct 02 - Hamilton (tentative)

Oct 03 - Wakefield - The Black Sheep Inn w/ The Buttless Chaps  
 Oct 04 - Montreal - TBC  
 Oct 05 - Saul Ste. Marie - TBC  
 Oct 06 - Moose Jaw - TBC  
 Oct 10 - Saskatoon - Lydia's  
 Oct 11 - Calgary - The Ship And Anchor  
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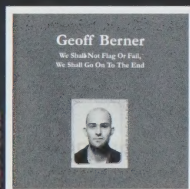
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—Calgary Sun

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 write witty, biting satire"*  
 —Toronto's EYE Weekly

*"We Shall Not Flag Or Fail is  
 surprising, intelligent, funny and sad."*  
 —Exclaim Magazine



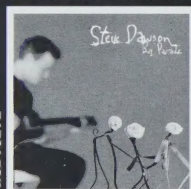
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—No Depression,  
 US Roots Magazine



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—Americana UK

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 more notice of the place than we are of New York"*

—Comes With A Smile UK

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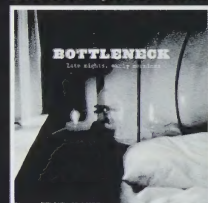
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## PENGUINE EGGS

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This magazine takes its name from Nic  
Jones' wonderful *Penguin Eggs* — a collec-  
tion of mainly traditional British folk songs  
revitalized with extraordinary flair and inge-  
nuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has  
grown into a source of inspiration for such  
young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and  
Eliza Carthy. Nic, sadly, suffered horrific in-  
juries in a car crash in 1982. He has never fully  
recovered and now seldom performs. His  
care and respect shown for the tradition and  
prudence to recognize the merits of innova-  
tion makes *Penguin Eggs* such an out-  
rageously fine recording. This magazine strives  
to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones' *Penguin  
Eggs* is available through Topic Records in  
Europe and Shanachie in North America.

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for the Arts**

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du Canada**

## editorial

As the pages of this issue came together, it  
slowly dawned on me that there's some-  
thing very exciting happening in this coun-  
try. Canadians are clearly creating their own  
unique blues revival. And it's developing  
simultaneously but independently in all cor-  
ners of the country. The evidence, m'lord, is  
overwhelming.

Looking back, it seems that the first real  
rumblings of this revival appear around  
1998-99 with a couple of key releases from  
Michael Jerome Browne and Ray  
Bonneville. Then, at the dawn of the new  
millennium, Harry Manx made *Dog My Cat*  
and followed that with the award-winning  
*Wise And Otherwise*. Manx's remarkable  
brand of acoustic blues and Indian ragas  
played on the Mohan Veena and six-string  
banjo bares little resemblance to the electric,  
dog-eared standards that have dominated the  
genre since World War II. For that matter,  
neither does Browne's brilliant stringband  
blues and Bonneville's elegant solo finger-  
picking and harmonica playing.

The rumblings turned into a roar this past  
summer, especially at the Winnipeg folk  
festival. There, former Crash Test Dummy,  
Ben Darvill, previewed tracks from his new  
disc, *Son of Dave*. Nothing I've seen or  
heard in the blues idiom in years prepared  
me for his exhilarating combination of solo  
hip hop beats, electronic wizardry, and har-  
monica playing.

And later that very same day, the massed  
ranks of The Silver Hearts created a similar  
sense of excitement for entirely different  
reasons. Any band that plays Leadbelly on a  
sousaphone and theremin deserves wide-  
spread recognition in my book. Po' Girl too.  
They also released their debut this summer.  
With intuitive flair, they approached blues  
and jazz with a banjo, clarinet and penny  
whistle, for heaven's sakes. And then  
there's The Agnostic Mountain Gospel  
Choir — a startling combination of equal  
parts Howlin' Wolf and Dock Boggs.

All of these aforementioned maple-leaved  
maestros rely largely on acoustic instru-  
ments that are played with heart-warming  
instinct and ingenuity. It clearly separates  
them from the hackneyed electric guitar  
driven drivel that has, for far too long,  
passed for authenticity or originality.

Whatever, this bold new sense of adventure  
afoot in Canada couldn't have come at a  
better time in this, The Year Of The Blues.  
That Holger Petersen — host of CBC  
Radio's Saturday Night Blues — recently re-  
ceived the Order of Canada, can only add to  
further national celebrations. Faustian bar-  
gains, obviously, have been struck in the  
Great White North

— Roddy Campbell

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PENGUINE  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

**Editorial**



## a&amp;b sounds top 20

Compiled from August sales at all a&b  
sounds' stores throughout Canada

- |                                   |                        |                 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Lucinda Williams               | World Without Tears    | (Lost Highway)  |
| 2. Blackie and the Rodeo Kings    | Bark                   | (True North)    |
| 3. Kathleen Edwards               | Faller                 | (Maple)         |
| 4. Gillian Welch                  | Soul Journey           | (Stony Plain)   |
| 5. The Be Good Tanyas             | Chinatown              | (Netwerk)       |
| 6. Scruggs, Watson and Skaggs     | Three Pickers          | (Rounder)       |
| 7. Various Artists                | Harley Davidson Blues  | (Capitol)       |
| 8. Po' Girl                       | Po' Girl               | (Festival)      |
| 9. Eva Cassidy                    | Songbird               | (Bliss Street)  |
| 10. Alison Krauss & Union Station | Live                   | (Rounder)       |
| 11. B.B. King                     | Reflections            | (Universal)     |
| 12. Buddy Guy                     | Blues Singer           | (Silverstone)   |
| 13. The Be Good Tanyas            | Blue Horse             | (Netwerk)       |
| 14. Ani DiFranco                  | Evolve                 | (Rightous Babe) |
| 15. Robert Cray                   | Time Will Tell         | (Sanctuary)     |
| 16. Richard Thompson              | Old Kit Bag            | (True North)    |
| 17. Gordon Lightfoot              | Complete Greatest Hits | (Rhino)         |
| 18. Big Dave McLean               | Blues From The Middle  | (Stony Plain)   |
| 19. Luther Wright & The Wrongs    | Guitar Pickin' Martyrs | (Universal)     |
| 20. Hary Manx & Kevin Breit       | Jubilee                | (NorthernBlues) |

## megatunes top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at  
Megatunes, 932 17th Ave., SW, Calgary,  
Alberta, T2T 0A2

- |                              |                      |                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Jayhawks              | Rainy Day Music      | (Lost Highway)   |
| 2. Lucinda Williams          | World Without Tears  | (Lost Highway)   |
| 3. Gillian Welch             | Soul Journey         | (Stony Plain)    |
| 4. John Mellencamp           | Trouble No More      | (Sony)           |
| 5. Etta James                | Let's Roll           | (Private Music)  |
| 6. The Co-Dependents         | Live                 | (Independent)    |
| 7. Johnny Cash               | The Man Comes Around | (Lost Highway)   |
| 8. Willie Nelson and Friends | Live And Kickin'     | (Lost Highway)   |
| 9. Various Artists           | Johnny's Blues       | (Northern Blues) |
| 10. Po' Girl                 | Po' Girl             | (Festival)       |

## moondance top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at  
Moondance, 425 George St. N.,  
Peterborough, ON., K9H 3R4

- |                        |                      |                  |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Be Good Tanyas  | Chinatown            | (Netwerk)        |
| 2. Various Artists     | Johnny's Blues       | (Northern Blues) |
| 3. Buddy Guy           | Blues Singer         | (Silverstone)    |
| 4. Gillian Welch       | Soul Journey         | (Stony Plain)    |
| 5. Africando           | Martina              | (Stems)          |
| 6. Various Artists     | History of UK Blues  | (Indigo)         |
| 7. Richard Thompson    | The Old Kit Bag      | (True North)     |
| 8. Otis Taylor         | Truth Is Not Fiction | (Telarc)         |
| 9. John Martyn         | And Live...          | (Voiceprint)     |
| 10. Rockin' Highliners | Sputnik Cafe         | (Severn)         |

## ckua top 15

Compiled from June and July total plays at  
CKUA Radio, 580 AM throughout Alberta.

- |                                |                               |                 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Blackie and the Rodeo Kings | Bark                          | (True North)    |
| 2. Burning Spear               | Free Man                      | (World-ISC)     |
| 3. Sarah Jane Morris           | Love and Pain                 | (Evolver)       |
| 4. Thievery Corporation        | The Richest Man In Babylon    | (Beggars Group) |
| 5. Bruce Cockburn              | You've Never Seen Everything  | (True North)    |
| 6. Bomba                       | A Mi Me Gusta                 | (Spirit River)  |
| 7. Buddy Guy                   | Blues Singer                  | (Silverstone)   |
| 8. Marcia Ball                 | So Many Rivers                | (Alligator)     |
| 9. Tim O'Brien                 | Traveller                     | (Sugar Hill)    |
| 10. Macy Gray                  | The Trouble With Being Myself | (Sony)          |
| 11. Gillian Welch              | Soul Journey                  | (Stony Plain)   |
| 12. Po' Girl                   | Po' Girl                      | (Festival)      |
| 13. Mike Plume                 | Table For One                 | (Stony Plain)   |
| 14. Various Artists            | Reggae On The River           | (Earthbeat)     |
| 15. Jack Johnson               | On And On                     | (Universal)     |

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## Gillian Welch

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- Cal Wilson, Globe and Mail

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## galliard top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at Galliard Music, 101 - 3 Fan Tan Alley, Victoria, BC, V8W 3G9

- |                                   |                            |                 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Thierry Robin & Gulabi Sapera  | Rahki                      | (Nabe)          |
| 2. Michael Marshall & Chris Thile | Into The Cauldron          | (Sugar Hill)    |
| 3. Shooglenifty                   | The Arms Dealer's Daughter | (Compass)       |
| 4. Eliza Carthy                   | Anglicana                  | (Topic)         |
| 5. Various Artists                | Balkan Blues               | (World Network) |
| 6. Alin Qasimov                   | Loves Deep Ocean           | (World Network) |
| 7. Oliver Mtukudzi                | Paivepo                    | (Putamayo)      |
| 8. Maura O'Connell                | Walls And Windows          | (Sugar Hill)    |
| 9. Djivan Gasparian               | Heavenly Duduk             | (World Network) |
| 10. Mariza                        | Fado Curvo                 | (Times Square)  |



Maura O'Connell

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PENGUIN  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

Charts

## rose top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at Rose Music, 4137A 4th Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 1H8

- |                                 |                        |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Undertakin' Daddies          | Devil In The Rearview  | (Caribou)        |
| 2. The Be Good Tanyas           | Chinatown              | (Nettwerk)       |
| 3. Kim Barlow                   | Gingerbread            | (Caribou)        |
| 4. Kim Barlow                   | Humminah               | (Caribou)        |
| 5. Valle Son                    | Valle Son de Cuba      | (Caribou)        |
| 6. Undertakin' Daddies          | Undertakin' Daddies    | (Caribou)        |
| 7. Aylie Sparks                 | Beautiful and Deranged | (Independent)    |
| 8. Norah Jones                  | Come Away With Me      | (Blue Note)      |
| 9. John Reichman & The Jaybirds | Field Guide            | (Corvus Records) |
| 10. Daniel Lanois               | Shine                  | (Anti)           |



Norah Jones

## music top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at Music, 263 Huron Rd., Sebringville, ON, N0K 1X0

- |                                    |                              |                 |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Le Vent du Nord                 | Maudite Maison!              | (Borealis)      |
| 2. Creaking Tree String Quartet    | Creaking Tree String Quartet | (Independent)   |
| 3. Po' Girl                        | Po' Girl                     | (Festival)      |
| 4. Hary Manx & Kevin Breit         | Jubilee                      | (NorthernBlues) |
| 5. Daniel Lanois                   | Shine                        | (Anti)          |
| 6. Cameo Blues Band                | All Work And No Play         | (Independent)   |
| 7. David Francey                   | Skating Rink                 | (Lakar Music)   |
| 8. Scarlett, Washington & Whiteley | Sitting On A Rainbow         | (Borealis)      |
| 9. Ron Hynes                       | Get Back Change              | (Borealis)      |
| 10. Connie Kaldor                  | Vinyly Songbook              | (Independent)   |



Connie Kaldor

## highlife top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

- |                              |                            |                 |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. The Be Good Tanyas        | Chinatown                  | (Nettwerk)      |
| 2. Michael Franti            | Songs From The Front Porch | (Boo Boo Wax)   |
| 3. Daniel Lanois             | Shine                      | (Anti)          |
| 4. D.J. I Sabbah             | As Far As                  | (Six Degrees)   |
| 5. Po' Girl                  | Po' Girl                   | (Festival)      |
| 6. Various Artists           | Den Of Thieves             | (Lounge)        |
| 7. Orchestra Baobab          | Specialists In All Styles  | (Nonesuch)      |
| 8. Ry Cooder & Manuel Galbán | Mambo Sinuendo             | (Nonesuch)      |
| 9. Gigi                      | Illuminated Audio          | (Palm Pictures) |
| 10. Bembeya Jazz             | Bembeya                    | (Marabi)        |

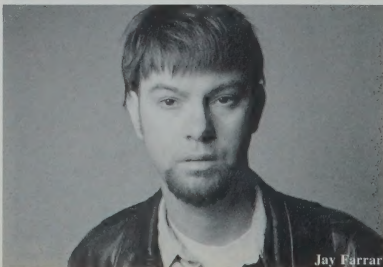


Daniel Lanois

## soundscapes top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at Soundscapes, 572 College St, Toronto ON, M6G 1B3

- |                      |                         |                    |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Gillian Welch     | Soul Journey            | (Stony Plain)      |
| 2. Tindersticks      | Sometimes It Hurts      | (Beggar's Banquet) |
| 3. Drive By Truckers | Decoration Day          | (Artemis)          |
| 4. Jay Farrar        | Terror!                 | (Artemis)          |
| 5. Fembots           | Small Town Murder Scene | (Paper Bag)        |
| 6. Jason Collett     | Motor Motel Love Songs  | (Arts & Crafts)    |
| 7. Kathleen Edwards  | Failor                  | (Maple)            |
| 8. Bill Frisell      | Intercontinentals       | (Nonesuch)         |
| 9. Lucinda Williams  | World Without Tears     | (Lost Highway)     |
| 10. Jayhawks         | Rainy Day Music         | (Lost Highway)     |



Jay Farrar





The Devil's own Canadian cover

Rounder Records, USA, considered the cover of **Bruce Cockburn's** latest recording demonic and had it changed for American distribution. Juno Award-winning artist **Michael Wrycraft** designed the original art work for Cockburn's label, True North Records, who licensed *You've Never Seen Everything*, to Rounder.

"At first I was appalled," says Wrycraft. "They thought it was the Devil or a speed-metal cover. Bruce called it his best cover ever. Then I laughed very hard. And then I was very excited by it. How important was I to get banned in the United States. It's my chance to go down in history alongside the guy who designed **David Bowie's** second Tin Machine album cover – the one with the naked statues that show stone penises."

**Bernie Finkelstein**, Cockburn's manager, says Rounder asked True North to change the cover because they felt it looked Satanic or heavy metal.

"I think it was foolish myself," says Finkelstein. "I happen to love the Canadian cover. I asked Bruce and he thought it was silly. They're very conservative in America, what can I tell you... But it seemed a reasonable thing to look at given their fears."

To placate Rounder, True North juggled Wrycraft's artwork and a red print of Cockburn, pulled from the inside of the Canadian cover, appeared on the front of the U.S. release. Rounder Records never returned its calls from Penguin Eggs.

★ ★ ★



The God-fearing American version

Stony Plain Record's founder and president, **Holger Petersen**, was appointed to the Order of Canada in August. It's the highest honour bestowed by the country for lifetime achievement.

Petersen, radio host of Saturday Night Blues on CBC and The Natch'l Blues on CKUA in Alberta, received his honour for his contributions to the Canadian music industry.

He founded his Edmonton-based recording and music publishing company in 1976. Since then, the label has released hundreds of albums that have earned numerous Juno awards, including Independent Record Company of the Year.

His citation reads in part: "A founder of Edmonton's folk festival, he has been an industry builder who has created new outlets for Canadian talent to develop skills and increase visibility, nationally and internationally."

Petersen will receive his honour at a future formal ceremony at Rideau Hall, Ottawa, from the Right Honourable **Adrienne Clarkson**, Governor General of Canada.

In the same national announcement, PEI singer-songwriter **Lennie Gallant** was made a Member of the Order of Canada for his poignant songs, many of his best chronicling the lives of people dealing with tremendous adversity.

Gallant has won 13 East Coast Music Awards – a record number for a solo artist – and received several JUNO nominations. His songs have been recorded by over 30 artists internationally. He is a board member of The Songwriters Association of Canada and a spokesperson for UNESCO.

★ ★ ★

**The Friends of Fiddler's Green** will receive the third annual Estelle Klein Achievement Award at the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals conference in Sudbury, October 17-19. The award honours their contributions and substantial influence as a group and as individuals on Ontario and Canada's folk music community.

They initially evolved as the house band for the Toronto folk club, Friends of Fiddlers Green in the early '70s. **Grit Laskin, Ian Robb, Alistair Brown, Laurence Stevenson, Tam Kearney, Jim Strickland** and **David Parry** are the original members. More recent recruits include **Cherie Whalen** and **Ian Clark**.

Despite hectic performance schedules, members of the band all maintain full-time jobs. Between them they have established three influential folk clubs – Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club in London, Old Sod Folk Club in Ottawa, and Fiddler's Green Folk Club in Toronto, co-founded national folk music record label Borealis Records, contributed a regular column for Sing Out! Magazine, been the hosts of several folk music radio shows such as, A Sign of the Times, which has an established 25 years on London radio, as well as Off She Goes, a show which has been syndicated for 5 years on National Public Radio in the United States. As well as being known as world-class creators of several instruments, they have coordinated, taught, and played at folk camps and festivals across North America.

The award will be presented on October 18th during the gala dinner at the conference. Past recipients include **Estelle Klein, Jackie Washington** and **Ian Tambllyn**. For more information, contact the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals toll free at 1-866-292-6233 or e-mail info@ocff.ca, or visit www.ocff.ca

The Friends' Ian Robb, as part of Ottawa's vocal harmony trio **Finest Kind** (Robb, **Ann Downey** & **Shelley Posen**), released their third disc, *Silks & Spices* in August. It's available from [www.finestkind.ca](http://www.finestkind.ca).

★ ★ ★

An all Canadian folk and roots music series will air weekly on the not for profit television network, Vision TV, beginning early in 2004.

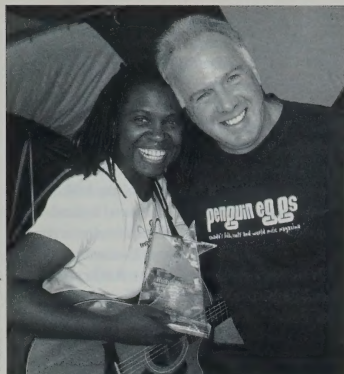
**Connie Kaldor** at Wood River Hall will feature the Saskatchewan born, Montreal-based singer-songwriter and her guests performing before a live audience in a country hall setting in the mythical town of Wood River – the name of one of Connie's songs.

The line-up for the first season includes **Bruce Cockburn, The Duhks, The Wailin' Jennys, Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, James Keeleghan, Sylvia and Clay Tyson, Stringband, Shari Ulrich, Scarlett, Washington & Whiteley, Bob Evans, Eileen Laverty, Roy Forbes** and **April Verch**. The Pembroke born fiddler, Verch, is also a member of the house band, a trio which also consists of **Bill Gossage** on bass and **Paul Campagne** on



Friends of Fiddlers Green: Estelle Klein Achievement Award recipients





Ruthie Foster with Penguin Eggs' editor Roddy Campbell

guitar. Former host of CBC Radio's *Simply Folk*, **Bruce Steele**, is co-ordinating the acts and the action.

The broadcast dates have yet to be finalised by Vision television. Details should be available in the next issue. The program will also air on Knowledge Network in B.C. and Saskatchewan Communications Network after it plays on Vision.

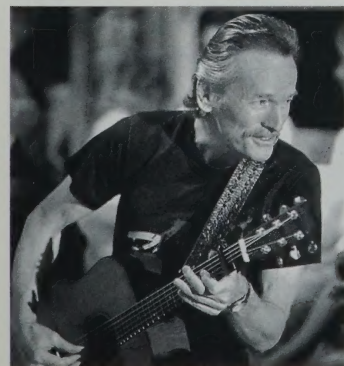
★ ★ ★

The inaugural Western Canadian Music Alliance conference is being held September 25-28 in Regina, SK, at the Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts. The WCMA is an amalgamation of the music industry associations of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon. Its mandate is to publicize and promote the artists who enrich and fuel the Western Canadian music scene.

Nominees for the Outstanding Roots Album of the Year include: **Leon & Eric Bibb**, *A Family Affair*; **Bill Bourne**, *Voodoo King*; **The Bill Hilly Band**, *All Day Everyday*; **The Be Good Tanyas**, *Chinatown*; **The Duhks**, *Your Daughters and Your Sons*.

★ ★ ★

And speaking of The Duhks... The Winnipeg-based quartet just signed a record deal with prestigious US bluegrass label, Sugar Hill – home to performers as diverse as **Doc Watson** and **Dolly**



Gordon Lightfoot: tribute album set for release

**Parton**. Their Juno-nominated debut disc, *Your Daughters and Your Sons*, will be released Stateside later in the fall. Meanwhile, they have secured several prominent opening slots for mandolin maestro **David Grisman's** upcoming tour of the northern US.

Former **Scrjij MacDuhk** – a fore-runner to The Duhks – guitarist **Joël Fafard** has his tune, *Megan And The Wascanna Cyclone*, included in **Mel Bay's** Master's Anthology For Finger-Style Guitar Solos- Vol. 3 as arranged by Regina's **Bob Evans**. Evans recorded the tune on his debut CD, *Caffeinated Coffee*, which was awarded the Outstanding Instrumental Recording in the 2000 Prairie Music Awards.

Meanwhile, back in Winnipeg, singer-songwriter **Dale Nikkel** has relocated there from Edmonton where he had been based for the last four years. Nikkel was a recent finalist in the folk category of the 2003 UK Songwriting Contest.

Current Winnipeg resident **James Keelaghan** was voted one of the Top 100 folk artists in the last 20 years by listeners of WUMB 91.9FM in Boston. Keelaghan has a new album scheduled for release in January, which will feature re-recordings of songs from his previous albums.

He has spent the past summer recording and touring with **Spirit of the West's** multi-instrumentalist, **Hugh McMillan**. Spirit of the West will re-group this fall to write material for a new album.

★ ★ ★

The second annual Roots on the Rails criss-crosses Canada from Vancouver to Toronto and back between April 1 - 9, 2004. Promoter **Charlie Hunter** has booked vintage 1950s stainless-steel dome cars, sleepers and a performance section from Via Rail. On the journey east, April 1-5, **Tom Russell** and his partner, **Andrew Hardin**, **The Hot Club of Cowtown** and a changing cast of musicians and singers will host daily and evening workshops and concerts. The return trip, April 5-9, will feature **Fred Eaglesmith**, **Willie P. Bennett**, **Washboard Hank**, **The D. Rangers**, **The Corb Lund Band** and, again, a rotating collection of performers. Each trip is a separate package. For further information, visit [www.rootsontherails.com](http://www.rootsontherails.com). Or call 802-875-4504.

★ ★ ★

The Edmonton Folk Music Festival, it seems, can do nothing wrong these days. Not only did it sell out all of its 10,000 early bird passes for its latest event, but **Victoria Beckham**, the former Posh Spice and current wife of English soccer superstar **David Beckham**, was recently photographed in New York wearing an orange festival T-shirt. Eight photos of Victoria with the T-shirt appeared in the August 12 issue of the U.K.'s celebrity magazine, OK. Judging by the logo, it's possibly 15 years old. Festival artistic director **Terry Wickham** has no idea how she got it but speculated she may have picked it up in a retro store.

The Edmonton folk festival donated five crystal glass awards for the winners of the 2001 and 2002 Penguin Eggs' critics' polls. At the festival, **Harry Manx** received two awards – Critics' Favourite New Discovery of 2001 and Album of the Year 2002 for *Wise And Otherwise* – from Alberta's

Minister for Culture and Community Development, **Gene Zwodzesky**. Wickham presented **David Francey** with Album of the Year 2001 for *Far End of Summer*. And CKUA's radio host **Tom Coxworth** and Penguin Eggs' editor, **Roddy Campbell**, gave one each to **Kathleen Edwards** and **Ruthie Foster**, who were tied as Critics' Favourite New Discovery of 2002. Penguin Eggs plans to eventually host an annual awards event to honour the best in folk, roots and world music in Canada. Campbell welcomes any advice or input for such a venture. He can be reached at [penguineggs@shaw.ca](mailto:penguineggs@shaw.ca)

★ ★ ★

Canadian folk-roots and blues labels Borealis and NorthernBlues combined recently to record and release a first ever star-studded all-Canadian tribute to **Gordon Lightfoot**. **The Tragically Hip**, **Blue Rodeo**, **Ron Sexsmith**, **The Cowboy Junkies**, **Bruce Cockburn** and **Jessie Winchester** are among the artists who recorded Lightfoot songs for *Beautiful: A Tribute to Gordon Lightfoot*. Set for release October 7, it will include a Blue Rodeo version of one of Lightfoot's earlier songs, *Go Go Round*. **Murray McLauchlan**, tackles *Home From the Forest*. And James Keelaghan covers the epic, *Canadian Railroad Trilogy*. **Aengus Finnan** closes the disc with **Lightfoot** – a simple salute to the songwriter. Almost two years in the making, the packaging will include a 20-page booklet.

Still with Borealis, company-co-founder and luthier Grit Laskin's has his *A Guiltmaker's Canvas* published by Backbeat Books. It features Laskin's highly-decorative inlay artwork and is set for release October 15.

**Christina Smith** and **Jean Hewson** have gone in-



Posh Spice and her Edmonton Folk Music Festival T-Shirt



to the studio in St. John's with producer **Bill Garrett** to start recording a new album of originals and traditional Newfoundland music. It's due out in early 2004. And **Tom Lewis** has just finished recording a new album with **Tanglefoot** among other guest musicians. It will be in stores by Christmas.

★ ★ ★

After 36 years without recording, veteran Scottish-Canadian folk singer and songwriter **Enoch Kent** is making up for lost time with his second release in a year. Following on the heels of *I'm A Workin' Chap*, Kent's new collection of songs, *Love, Lust & Loathing*, has love and betrayal as its theme. The material is both traditional and contemporary and accompanying Kent are **Ian Bell** (guitar), **Shelley Brown** (flute), **Tim Harrison** (guitar), and **Lawrence Stevenson** (fiddle). It's set for release on Sept 21 at the Flying Cloud Folk Club, 292 Brunswick Ave., Toronto.

★ ★ ★

The Canadian Folk Music Walk of Fame website – [www.folkwalk.ca/english.htm](http://www.folkwalk.ca/english.htm) – held a national vote in August to find the inaugural seven Canadian folk and roots celebrities who will have their names enshrined in bronze maple leaf plaques mounted in the sidewalk of Bank Street in the section of Ottawa known as Old Ottawa South. The Canadian Folk Music Walk of Fame officially opens on October 4, 2003. Additional blank plaques will be laid into the sidewalk for future investitures.

★ ★ ★

Toronto's Winterfolk Festival returns January 30 - Feb. 4, 2004 as, surprisingly enough, Winterfolk II. While its program leans towards Ontario-based performers, a third of the acts, will possibly include national and international artists. Unlike summer festivals attracting people to one spot, Winterfolk occurs in a tight-knit cluster of venues, which encourages the sampling of various shows nightly. Full details are available at [www.winterfolk.com](http://www.winterfolk.com)

★ ★ ★

The Oasis Restaurant and Pub, 780 Queen St. E., Toronto, launched a singer-songwriter series in July. It will run on a monthly basis until November. Each Thursday evening concert will feature three artists.

The remaining schedule is: September 25: **John Dorsey**, **Chris Cuddy**, **David Newland**; October 30: **Brian Gladstone**, **Marianne Girard**, **Bill Colgate**; November 27: **Brian Katz**, **Lisa Winn**, **Sam Larkin**. This series is organized and hosted by singer-songwriter **Howard Gladstone**. For more information contact Gladstone by e-mail: [songseries@hotmail.com](mailto:songseries@hotmail.com).

★ ★ ★

**Amos Garrett** arrived in London in early July as part of a tour billed as **Amos Garrett & The Distant Cousins**. They came hauling a cache of live recordings with them for his next album. The cousins in question were **Jim Cottle** on slide guitar (ex-**Van Morrison**), **Ted McKenna** on drums (ex-**Rory Gallagher**) and **Alan Thomson** (ex-**John Martyn**) on electric bass. Chatting after the concert at The Borderline, Garrett did not exclude the eventual inclusion of some studio material on his postcard from Britain for release at some indeterminate date on Stony Plain Records.

★ ★ ★

**Alison Krauss & Union Station** and the **Del McCoury Band** lead the field of nominations for the 14th annual International Bluegrass Music Awards to take place October 2, at the Kentucky Center for the Arts in Louisville, Kentucky. Krauss and Union Station received 13 nominations, McCoury and his band 12, **Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder** seven and **The Lynn Morris Band** six. This year's inductee to the Bluegrass Music Hall of Honor is the groundbreaking and influential banjo player, **J. D. Crowe**. Krauss and Union Station member, **Dan Tyminski**, will co-host the event.

The nominations for Album of the Year include: **Alison Krauss & Union Station** *Live*, **Alison Krauss & Union Station**; *Live At The Charleston Music Hall*, **Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder**; *Shape of a Tear*, **The Lynn Morris Band**; *Songs From The Workbench*, **Larry Cordle & Lonesome Standard Time**; and, *Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Vol. III*; **Nitty Gritty Dirt Band**.

Instrumental Album of the Year: *The Bluegrass Fiddle Album*, **Aubrey Haynie**; **Glen Duncan**, *I Rest My Case*, **Randy Howard**; *Kickin' Grass*, **Jesse Brock**; and, *Spider Bit The Baby*, **Kenny Bake**.

Entertainer of the Year: **Alison Krauss & Union Station**, **Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver**, **The Del McCoury Band**, **Mountain Heart** and **Rhonda Vincent & The Rage**.

Emerging Artists of the Year: **Nothin' Fancy**, **David Peterson & 1946**, **Kenny & Amanda Smith** and **Wildfire**.

★ ★ ★

In association with Folkworks – the Folk Development Agency for Northern England – the University of Newcastle, offers a four-year degree in Folk and Traditional Music. Instructors include **Alistair Anderson** (concertina), **Kathryn Tickell** (Northumbrian pipes), **Sandra Kerr** (voice and concertina) **Catriona Macdonald** (fiddle) and **Karen Tweed** (accordion). For further information contact Music, University of Newcastle, Newcastle Upon Tyne, England, NE1 7RU; PH: 011-44-191-222 6736; [music@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:music@ncl.ac.uk) Or, from Folkworks, 69 Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1SG. PH011-44- 0191-222 1717; [folkworks@folkworks.co.uk](mailto:folkworks@folkworks.co.uk).

★ ★ ★

**Eliza Carthy** has been short-listed for the prestigious Mercury Prize – the leading music award in the UK – for her current release, *Anglicana*. The opposition includes **Coldplay** and **Radiohead**. Her double disc, *Red Rice*, also received a nomination in 1998. The latest winner will be announced in September.

**Celine Donoghue**, tenor-banjo and fiddle player with the Scottish group **Calaisaig**, received the **Auleen Theriault Young Tradition Award** from Goderich Celtic Festival. She received the award for her great technical skills and warm personality.

**Kate Rusby's** new album, *Underneath The Stars* was released August 18. While it features her usual band members – **John McCusker**, **Ian Carr**, **Andy Cutting**, **Ewan Vernal**, **Andy Seward**, **James MacKintosh** and **Michael McGoldrick**, she is also joined by guest musicians, **Simon Fowler** (**Ocean Colour Scene**), **Eddi Reader** and the **Grimethorpe Colliery Band**. Rusby will be recording a DVD at her concert in Leeds, September 6, which will include interviews, backstage footage and songs filmed in the studio with special guests. It will be released at the end of the year. For a sample of the new disc visit [www.katerusby.com/](http://www.katerusby.com/)



Alison Krauss: multiple IBMA nominations



Kate Rusby: new album



Eliza Carthy: Mercury Award nomination



**Sam Phillips**, the record producer who built Sun Studios in Memphis, Tennessee, where he oversaw the birth of rock 'n' roll, died July 30 at St. Francis Hospital in Memphis. He was 80, writes Roddy Campbell

Phillips produced **Elvis Presley's** first record, the 1954 single that featured covers of **Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup's** *That's All Right, Mama* and **Bill Monroe's** *Blue Moon of Kentucky*.

"God only knows that we didn't know it would have the response that it would have," Phillips said in an interview in 1997. "But I always knew that the rebellion of young people, which is as natural as breathing, would be a part of that breakthrough," he said.

Born Samuel Cornelius Phillips in Florence, Ala., Phillips worked as an announcer at radio stations in Muscle Shoals, Ala., and Decatur, Ala., and Nashville, Tenn., before settling in Memphis in 1945. He started Sun Records in 1952 so he could record both rhythm & blues singers and country performers, then called country and western or hillbilly singers. As a result, he made some of the earliest recordings of blues icons' like **Howlin' Wolf**, **B.B. King**, **James Cotton**, **Ike Turner**, **Little Milton**, **Junior Parker**, **Rufus Thomas** and **Roscoe Gordon**.

Phillips' plan was to let artists who had no formal training play their music as they felt it, raw and full of life. The Sun motto was, "We Record Anything, Anywhere, Anytime."

But it was for the rock 'n' roll and rockabilly singers like Presley, **Johnny Cash**, **Carl Perkins**, **Charlie Feathers**, **Jerry Lee Lewis** — all of whom Phillips discovered and recorded — that placed him in the inaugural group of inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. When he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2001, he joined a group that includes only eight other artists (**Jimmie Rodgers**, **Hank Williams**, **Johnny Cash**, **Elvis Presley**, the **Everly Brothers**, **Bob Willis**, **Chet Atkins** and **Bill Monroe**) who have been inducted into both Halls.

Phillips sold Presley's contract in 1956 to RCA for \$35,000 — a significant amount in those days. He eventually got out of the recording business in 1962 and sold Sun Records in 1969 to producer **Shelby Singleton** of Nashville. The Sun studio on Union Avenue in Memphis still exists as a tourist attraction. In his later years, Phillips spent much of his time overseeing radio station **WLVS** in Memphis and others in Alabama. He stayed out of the limelight except for some appearances at Presley-related events after the star's death in 1977.

★ ★ ★

The griot kora player **Kaouding Cissokho** died in Dakar on 17 July of TB aged 38, writes **Ken Hunt**. Born in Sinthiou Maleme, Senegal on 2 November 1964, he came to foreign attention through his playing with **Baaba Maal** and the group **Daande Lenoi** (*Voice of the People*). He went on to play on Maal's crossover albums, some of the most enduring crossover albums of the 1990s, such as *Lam Toro* (1992), *Firin' In*

*Fouta* (1994) and *Nomad Soul* (1998). To use the jazz term, to hold the 'kora chair' with Baaba Maal you had to be good. Frankly, it was Maal's more traditional, acoustic-sounding music that impressed me more. When Maal went back to his roots, horrid cliché (as if he was never there), Cissokho was there for *Missing You* (*Mi Yeevni*) (2001). Cissokho was also there when the **Afro-Celts** formed and made West African, Irish and dance beats into a saucy ménage à trios. His name got around through the Real World connection. He guested on records by the Pakistani qawwali singer **Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan** and the Jamaican guitarist **Ernest Ranglin** amongst others but also made a solo album, *Kora Revolution* (1999). Apparently, a recording with his niece **Cisse Damba Kanoute** is in the can.

★ ★ ★

Although his music mostly falls outside the purview of this magazine, the saxophonist, composer and arranger **Benny Carter**, who died on 12 July at the age of 95, deserves to be remembered in these pages for his outstanding arrangements for **Maria Muldaur's** *Waitress In The Donut Shop* (1973), her daring follow-up to the massive-selling *Midnight At The Oasis*.

★ ★ ★

When **Compay Segundo** died aged 95 on Sunday, 13 July in Havana, he was accorded respect on a scale rarely seen in music, let alone such marginal music as Cuban-World Music", writes **Ken Hunt**. Within 48 hours, his death made international news. Arguably the last time any musician made such a 'front-page' impression in Europe, it would have been **Yehudi Menuhin** or **George Harrison**.

**Maximo Francisco Repilado Munoz**, Compay Segundo by nickname, was born in Siboney, Cuba, on 18 November 1907 and he was a musician plain and simple. By one of those great and good paradoxes of life he was heard and seen by fewer people than ever saw him play live. This was partially down to the nature of the genre, partially the runaway success he achieved in his tenth decade, the inordinate success of *Buena Vista Social Club*. After 1997 and the band's eponymous, Grammy-winning album, the public went apeshit and *Buena Vista Social Club* concerts sold out with dizzy-making speed.

A guitarist, armónico (a seven-string Spanish guitar derivative akin to tres) player, vocalist and composer, he saw Cuban music go through many and massive changes. While still a boy, his family moved to Santiago and in this musical hotbed he was turned on to hot local music with just a twist of jazz. He learned the clarinet and got to play on the radio with the **Cubanacan Quartet**. After them, he played with several ensembles such as the **Cuba Stars Quintet** and the **Huately Quartet**. With the second band he played in Mexico, itself no mean step, and got his snuzzle in two films, *Tierra Brava* and *México Lindo* (both 1938). Over the next decades Segundo celest his way through a number of ensembles. **El Conjunto**

**Matamoros, Duo Los Compadres** and **Compay Segundo y sus Muchachos** are chiselled deep in the record, even if the shellac record was faint.

In 1989, taking a break from rolling cigars, he performed at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, and things began to snowball. Two years later, a whole host of Cuban veterans, including **Ibrahim Ferrer**, **Ruben González** and **Eliades Ochoa**, were rounded up to work with the US guitarist **Ry Cooder**. World Circuit's resultant album *Buena Vista Social Club* (1997) became a classic of world music.

*Buena Vista Social Club* brought Segundo national recognition too with Cuba's Orden Felix Varela award. When Cooder returned to Cuba, he took the German film-maker **Wim Wenders** with him; the resultant film mixed archival, concert and studio footage. Again it was called *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999). Segundo was a major presence. Subsequently, he also launched a solo career and enjoyed his international success. What really shone when seeing him play was the sheer appreciation of what fate had bestowed on him. By July 2003, *Buena Vista Social Club* had sold between seven and eight million copies internationally by World Circuit's estimate and the performers were seeing the money.

★ ★ ★

**Celia Cruz** died on 16 July aged 77 in Fort Lee, New Jersey, another major loss to Afro-Cuban and world music, writes **Ken Hunt**. She was born in Havana, Cuba on 21 October 1924 but defected to the USA where she made her name though her core audience always remained Hispanic. Part Mambo Mama, part Queen of Salsa, she was flamboyant by any standard. For her, the stage was a catwalk and as she paraded her latest costume she made **Tina Turner** look dowdy. Over a 60-year career, she made over 70 albums, attracted the cream of Afro-Cuban musicianship to her sessions and garnered awards (Grammys included) for her work. On a sociological level, she also raised the status of women in Hispanic society. By making it more than OK for a woman to sing so memorably, she helped rid émigré society of its double-standards.

★ ★ ★

**Howard Armstrong** better known as **Louie Blumie** died on 30 July aged 94 in Boston, Mass. He played the Devil's instrument, but it was for his fiddle and mandolin that he was especially known. Born William Howard Taft Armstrong in Dayton, TN, on 4 March 1909, he represented a link with the world of Afro-American string band music. He was the subject of two television documentaries, namely **Terry Zwiggoff's** *Louie Blumie* (1985) and **Leah Mahan's** *Sweet Old Song* (2002). Also noted in their passing are the Malagasy valiha player **Sylvestre Randafison** who died on 12 July aged about 75 and the songwriter **Ed Townsend**, the writer of **Marvin Gaye's** *Let's Get It On*. Townsend died on 13 August aged 74.





# Thank you

to all the patrons, volunteers and performers who made the  
**2003 Edmonton Folk Music Festival**  
such a resounding success.

**See you August 5 - 8, 2004**  
**for our 25th anniversary**



EDMONTON  
**FOLK MUSIC**  
FESTIVAL







Mariza

## Fado, the Future

*For 60 years, Amália Rodrigues dominated fado – often glibly referred to as Portuguese blues. Rising fadista Mariza Nunes is now frequently hailed as her successor. While respectful of its traditions, she exposes it to new dimensions. “I can say that I belong to fado – and also that fado belongs to me,” she tells Tony Montague.*

When it comes to a song tradition that developed, and still thrives, in the shadowy, intimate, late-night atmosphere of southern European taverns and restaurants, large, daylight, outdoor venues offer challenges to performer and listener alike.

Portuguese fado star Mariza showed her class and her charisma at both the Mission and Edmonton folk festivals this past summer with performances that earned standing ovations – an impressive response to intimate songs delivered in a language few understood.

Soul, however, is universal. And listeners were left in no doubt why she's filled concert halls, and garnered rave reviews, across Europe in the past year. Her performances in BC and Alberta introduced thousands to a rich vein of music that, until recently, has been little heard in the English-speaking world.

Fado is to Portugal what tango is to Argentina or flamenco to Andalucía: its deep roots reach in to the spirit of a people. And, like tango and flamenco, no one is sure exactly when or how it originated. There are several theories. Some academics believe fado trickled down to the common folk from the court and high society, others

argue it was brought by slaves. The most prevalent view is that fado – which means ‘fate’ – developed out of the mournful songs of sailors.

“I would agree that it is closely connected with the sea,” says Mariza, interviewed backstage at the Edmonton festival, after her performance. “For me fado is more than music, it’s a feeling.”

The emotion most closely associated with fado is *saudade*, a largely untranslatable word whose essence is a blend of yearning for and missing something essential – a love, a country, the past, a part of oneself. “And if you want to write about the ambience you could imagine a small, dark taverna, people drinking red wine, and the sound of the [12-stringed] Portuguese guitar,” says Mariza.

For sixty years one woman dominated the genre. If you’ve ever heard a recording of fado, the chances are that the singer was Amália Rodrigues. Portugal’s equivalent of Edith Piaf died in 1999, and Mariza is being hailed as her successor, though she deftly steps around that trap. “Amália doesn’t need a successor or a daughter, because her music is still alive,” she states quietly. Needless to say Rodrigues was Mariza’s primary inspiration, although they never met. “I cried for three days when she died, and couldn’t bring myself to go to the funeral, which was immense and very, very emotional.”

While essentially a traditional fadista, Mariza gives her performances a contemporary and dramatic edge through intelligent use of spot-lighting and carefully-choreographed move-

ments that emphasize certain key words or phrases, and the meaning of the songs, most of them written by poets and set to music. Dressed in a long gown, her fingers entwined in the fringes of a black shawl draped over her bare shoulders, her hair close-cropped and sculpted into rows of platinum-blond waves, Mariza strikes a bold and elegant figure.

Mariza Nunes was born in Mozambique, but her family moved to Portugal when she was a baby and settled in Mouraria, a Lisbon neighbourhood closely associated with fado. Barely four or five years old, she was interpreting in her own way the songs she heard around her.

“At that time I didn’t know how to read,” says Mariza, in clear though somewhat halting English. “My father made drawings on the paper and I start learning the lyrics with the drawings to help me remember.” She would join in the singing in the restaurant and ‘fado house’ that her parents ran, and became rapidly immersed in the culture. Mariza gained a strong local reputation. “Growing up in the traditional ambience, that’s what makes a fadista [fado singer].”

According to tradition the first great fadista was a young woman called Maria Severa who kept a small tavern in Lisbon with her mother. “She was also from Mouraria where I come from, and her mother was a gypsy,” says Mariza. In 1836 the beauty of Severa’s song seduced the Comte de Vimioso, and the scandal of their brief and tempestuous affair greatly increased the popularity of fado.

One of the items in Mariza’s concert set pays homage to her musical forebearer. It’s delivered in a particularly strong, full-throated style – as Mariza imagines Maria would have sung – and she ends the song with one foot raised up on a chair, lifting her black gown to reveal bright knitted stockings. More than just a sexy move, it’s also a symbolic way of proclaiming both her respect for tradition and her modernity as a fadista.

“We know that Maria wore striped stockings like mine – but they were black and red, and mine are multi-coloured because I live in the 21st century,” says Mariza, with a laugh.

In time, fado became so popular it was associated with Portugal itself. The dictators Antonio Salazar and his successor Marcello Caetano promoted it as a national genre. Following Caetano’s overthrow in the Carnation Revolution of 1974, fado inevitably slipped in popular favour. This partial eclipse ended with the outpouring of feeling throughout the country on the demise of Rodrigues.

Mariza received major media exposure for the first time as one of the guest singers in a couple of tribute concerts for Rodrigues, held in Lisbon and Oporto. Both events were carried live on TV, and Mariza’s impassioned performances caught the eye and ear of a nation. In 2000, she received the prestigious Voice of Fado award, presented by Central FM (Portugal’s national radio station). Two years ago she released her debut *Fado em Mim (Fado in me)*. It proved an unprecedented success for an album of the



genre, and she began performing abroad. Earlier this year Mariza won the BBC Radio3 Award for World Music in the category for Europe.

On tour Mariza is backed by the traditional instruments of fado: stand-up bass, Portuguese guitar or guitarra, and Spanish guitar (confusingly known as a viola). The guitarra embellishes the vocal melody, and the viola provides chordal accompaniment.

"I have been performing with my viola-player Antonio Neto for a very long time," says Mariza. "We started when I was six years-old and he was a teenager, learning to play from his grandfather. We used to make wonderful concerts on our street for the neighbours. It's really important to have people near me who understand me well. All the people I work with are friends."

Mariza isn't confined to these instruments however. She also uses cello and piano on *Fado em Mim*, emphasising the dark tonalities of the songs. On a couple of tracks she also brings in percussion, including the adufe drum typical of the folk music of Beira Baixa in north-east

Portugal. And with the song *O Deserto*, on her second album *Fado Curvo*, Mariza opens up a new dimension for fado - the use of brass. "I had an idea it would be a good mix to have the sound of the guitarra and the trumpet with a mute. I never heard of fado with a trumpet, but it worked perfectly. It's a trip between Lisbon and New York."

The songs on *Fado Curvo* are all striking, but most impressive is Mariza's interpretation of the quintessentially-fado lyrics of *Primavera*: All the love that bound us / As if it was made of wax, was broken and undone / Ah, fatal spring / How I wish,

how we wish / to have died that day. "It's my favourite fado," she reveals, "I don't know exactly why, but I love the poem, it's really special. Amalia [Rodrigues] used to sing that fado. It's traditional. I've sung it for a long time. That fado is my biggest passion." At both Mission and Edmonton, Mariza performed the song to close her set, and brought the crowds to their feet. The electricity generated could have powered Toronto for a week.

Asked how she works to identify with the tragic, intense persona in songs like *Primavera*, a very relaxed Mariza thinks a moment, then replies cryptically "I can say that I belong to fado - and also that fado belongs to me."

## Rollin' 'n' Tumblin'

*Former Crash Test Dummy, Ben Darvill, is now known as Son of Dave - a contemporary one-man band that has revolutionised the sound of the blues. "I wouldn't mind being a rock star again," he tells Roddy Campbell.*

A jumbo jet could land on the lapels of Ben Darvill's suit. With matching fedora, he deliberately flaunts a sinister matinee image of a '30s gangster. It somehow fits his persona as a blues maverick.

The conversion of the blues from a plaintive rural a cappella work chant into a rich, hard-edged, electric, urban phenomenon literally transformed popular culture worldwide. And yet for the past several decades, the blues remain fundamentally unchanged until recently, that is.

This past spring Darvill, a former Crash Test Dummy, pressed 200 copies of his disc *Son of Dave* and it offers as fresh and revolutionary approach to the blues as Muddy Waters picking up an electric guitar.

Darvill plays solo harmonica backed with delayed tapes and loops he records live on stage. The electronic gadgetry allows him to sing to accompanying hip hop beats. An African shaker and his pounding feet provide percussion. It's all extremely novel and incredibly thrilling, this contemporary one-man-band malarky, and a million miles from the blues samples Moby used to make a hit out of his disc *Play*.

"Dirty word for me, Moby. Dirty word," says Darvill on a rare visit home to Winnipeg to play the local summer folk festival. "The strongest parts of his songs were samples and they were songs that sounded like they were written by other people... I find the beats wimpy. What can I say? It doesn't make for good press slagging someone off but I'm not really a fan of that album... I gave it a listen before it got air play. And thought, 'No, that's sampling. It's not playing. It's not uplifting. I can't see it in a small tent of 50 people or in a stadium. It doesn't sound too genuine.' That said and done, the guy's talented and hopefully he'll make some more great records."

With the Crash Test Dummies, Darvill helped sell eight million records internationally. He left when front-man and principal songwriter Brad Roberts took over making their records and only brought the band together to tour.

"I did that for long enough and just needed to get



Photo: Angela Browne

Ben Darvill - Son of Dave

my ya yas out," says Darvill.

He settled in London, England. First in a "poncy flat" in celebrated Nottinghill Gate, then moved to the more utilitarian neighborhood of Killburn. And for a couple of years, he stayed at home and looked after his baby daughter.

"I kept playing, and gradually when I had time, I would go out and just busk because I couldn't get a gig. Being a member of the Crash Test Dummies didn't really draw punters into shows or sell any records. So I just started busking on the South Bank (of the river Thames) at nights. So people started offering me gigs. I had to accompany myself. So I pretty much had to learn on the fly - how to do the beats with my lips, shake a rattle and stomp my foot."

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Darvill initially received a harmonica as a kid for Christmas from his dad, Dave. And while Ben grew up listening to Dave's blues records, hearing James Cotton at the Winnipeg folk festival in 1979 also proved inspirational. Local blues boss, Big Dave MacLean, took him under his wing before Darvill formed his own R&B band. Clearly, despite his later rock leanings, blues appealed to the youngster.

"I'm good at it," he says nonchalantly. "I'm not really one for memorizing a lot of notes or chord changes, which made it difficult in Crash Test Dummies because Brad at one point was writing a key change to every song. So I had to brush up. It's not that difficult but I'm not one for knowing complex melodies be it fiddle tunes or be it jazz. I'm a pretty rudimentary guy. I rely a lot more on rhythm and feel. I'm very proud of the fact that some of my songs have no chord changes at all."

"The great thing about blues music, everyone can play along. That's folk music. It's a simple structure and everyone can come together. That's



Photo: Angela Browne

Shake yer money maker



what it's for. Whereas, I'm more selfish. I'm a one-man-band. I want to do it my way."

*Son of Dave* took almost 18 months to complete and was released on his own Husky Records. He pressed 200 copies in case he wanted to make changes for a larger run. Recorded more or less live and without overdubbing, its compelling earthiness coupled with Darvill's salty growl makes it a truly endearing release. Even the trio of dog-eared covers — Muddy Waters' *Mannish Boy*, Robert Johnson's *Crossroad Blues* and Elmore James' *Rollin' And Tumblin'* — receive an implausible new lease on life.

"I think I play them with respect. There are some that take old blues things and mix them with hip hop beats or dance beats and somehow sneer their way through it. "Those funny old guys with no teeth, let's rip them off. Isn't that old shitty music funny. Ha, ha, ha."

"Not to be snobby it's not that often you hear it done well — to mix a blues sound. It so often relies on guitars that it's not that special when you mix a hip hop beat with a blues riff. The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion do it. Again, it sometimes sounds a bit piss-takey with them."

While Darvill spent the remainder of the summer touring the UK with former Tricky singer Martina Topley-Bird, his eclectic list of solo gigs still range from skate-punk socials, burlesque parlours, "snobby" jazz clubs and even white-collar fight clubs. Apparently, British business men pay a fortune to beat the shit out of each other in the ring for charity.

"I've done a couple of them. In-between the boxing, they have me playing to 3000 people. It's fantastic. It's pretty challenging. They're pumped full of lager and testosterone. I play them all my fighting and drinking songs and I get them up on their feet."

"I wouldn't mind being a rock star again. That's

if everyone thinks that the music is good enough. Then I would appreciate selling lots of records and entertaining lots of people. I shoot as high as I can. I'm content. I've got a little thing I do on my own and I'm happy playing for 50 people or 50,000."



## Struck By Lightnin'

*Chris Smither battled his way back from the brink of oblivion almost 15 years ago to record an exceptional series of discs. His latest features old pal Bonnie Raitt on an epic cover of Bob Dylan's Desolation Row. "It sounded like we'd been living together for 20 years," he tells Chris Nickson*

Chris Smither has been around the block a few times. You can hear it in his voice. And you can hear it in his songs, where experience and hope mingle. But at 59, that's only to be expected. On *Train Home*, his 11th album, he distills everything into a remarkable collection of performances that manage to sound relaxed and intense at the same time.

"The basic tracks were recorded in the house," he explains. "We brought in a very high-end studio and set it up. It produced a comfort factor, a relaxed feel. I loved it, and David 'Goody' Goodrich really wanted to do it that way. He said he'd missed the intimacy in my studio records. He wanted people to hear them the way he first heard them across my dining room table."

So he simply played the songs, one after another. Then he'd take a break, and "then play them all again in a different order. We did that four times and we had them all."

But the New Orleans native, who makes his home in Boston, is used to performing; it's something he's been doing since 1966. During the early '70s he recorded three albums (one of which remains unreleased), and then "I just fell into all the

worst kinds of drugs and alcohol, mostly alcohol. When I got tired of that, or it got tired of me, I sort of washed up on a different shore and started recording and writing again. And things have been pretty good since about '89."

Since that rebirth his music has mined a rich seam, and he's found a voice and style that's truly his own, showing excellent chops as both songwriter and guitar picker. Still, that's perhaps to be expected from someone whose first inspiration was a bluesman who tapped his own deep well, Lightnin' Hopkins.

"In the '50s and '60s I was really into rock 'n' roll, and here was a guy who was playing rock 'n' roll all by himself. It just appealed. I never wanted to be in a band, I was always something of a loner. I was unsure of myself for one thing. I couldn't believe all this noise coming out of one guy with one acoustic guitar, and I couldn't imagine how it was done at first. After a while the lyric got to me. He was a wonderful storyteller. At the same time, there was nothing involved about it. There was a concision to it, a brevity of expression that spoke worlds. I even realized at an early age that it was the combination of the rhythmic aspect of it and it was all the things I liked about rock 'n' roll, a synthesis of rhythm and simple lyrics that just hit home with tremendous power. And the ultimate beauty was that I could do it by myself. I didn't have to be involved with other people. Rock 'n' roll lyrics didn't read well until the Beatles, Cream and everybody else."

It taught me a lot about guitar playing and solo orchestration of songs. That served me well when I started listening to Dylan. Dylan was a guy very much like me. He started off playing blues. On his first record, he was playing Blind Lemon Jefferson. And if you listen to what he does now, it's all informed by blues. That's me, too. It took me years to realize we'd followed the same path."

The discovery of music by the old bluesmen — often from the legendary *Anthology of American Music* — was a turning point for an entire generation of young musicians, what Smither terms "the cataclysmic fusion."

For Smither it came full circle with *Avalon Blues*, the tribute to the music of Mississippi John Hurt that was assembled by Peter Case. Hurt was Smither's "second bluesman, and at one time or another, I probably learned everything John Hurt ever did." He ended up covering *Frankie and Albert*, in a version that fell together in about an hour, "so we ran over to a studio and laid it down. I sent it to Peter Case, probably within two weeks of when he called me. Then two years later I was doing a show with him in Chicago and he handed me an advance copy of the record."

And on *Train Home's* epic performance (among other wonderful covers and his own material) he takes on Dylan, with his own interpretation of *Desolation Row*.

"That song stayed with me for years. There's a

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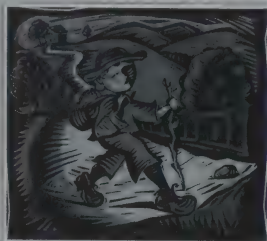
Photo: by Abigail Seymour

Chris Smither



# Win Richard Thompson's The Old Kit Bag

## RICHARD THOMPSON



The Old Kit Bag

Now entering his 31st year as a solo artist, Richard Thompson is without a shadow of a doubt, one of the greatest British post-war songwriters. Not only that, he is a masterful and influential guitarist. Now he has released *The Old Kit Bag*, of which Britain's leading newspaper, *The Guardian*, said: "Thompson remains a true English original: no one else could have written these dense, flinty songs." And his Canadian label, True North Records, have very kindly donated five copies of this double disc. To win one all you have to do is answer the following questions correctly and e-mail your answers to [penigneegs@hotmail.com](mailto:penigneegs@hotmail.com). Please don't forget to include your mailing address.

**Q1. Richard Thompson co-founded Fairport Convention. They had a hit with which Bob Dylan song?**

**Q2. Name the British motorbike Richard Thompson sings about.**

**Q3. Name the Richard Thompson tribute album that featured such noted rock acts as REM, Bonnie Raitt and David Byrne.**

Answers to The Henrys' competition are: Q1. Koa hardwood. Q2. *How's It Going?* Q3. Mary Margaret O'Hara. Unbelievably, only one person answered all the questions correctly. But being the extra nice people that we are here at Penguin Eggs, we've decided to give those with just two right answers a copy of *Joyous Porous*. The winners are: Pete Dako, Toronto, ON; Rene Deschamps, King City, ON; Jennifer Haggard, London, ON; Mark Tolley, Burlington, ON; Pat Battles, Victoria, BC; Melanie Bidewell, Winnipeg, MB.

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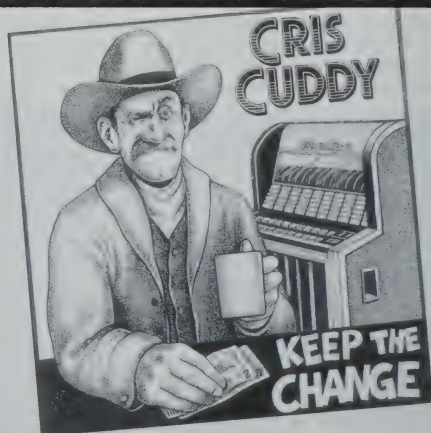


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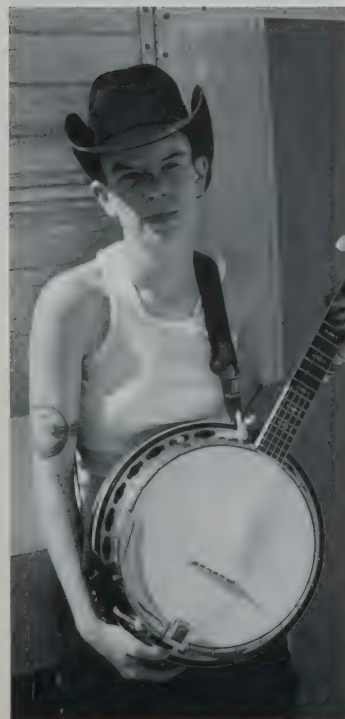


kind of intimate air of resignation about it that he never approached. He was still such an angry young man, he was like 23 when he wrote it. There's this quiet resignation about the song, and a bit of despair, too, but it needs to be recounted person to person. It's not a high dudgeon, declamatory thing at all. Goody told me he wanted to do it up, start off real simple and build into a big moment, then tail off. He said 'I want you to call your pal Bonnie [Raitt] and get her to work on it.' So I was calling in favors and he was right. I've never asked her to do anything before, I wanted to have something that made sense for her to work on rather than marquee value. And that was it. She did a killer job. I never even saw her. I sent her the basic acoustic version on disk. She went into the studio and laid down a whole bunch of stuff and said 'Take your pick.' And it was all good. It sounded like we'd been living together for 20 years."

There's plenty of his own material on *Train Home*, too, proof that Smithers is the equal of all his inspirations. There's maturity, in the very best way, throughout his work.

"Part of me wants to say it's gotten easier, and to a degree that's true. But there's another part of me that says it's just as hard as it ever was! The only difference is that now you have the confidence that if you keep at it, it will happen."

Which could almost stand as a metaphor for Smithers's own career.



Rae Spoon

## New Skool Folk

*There's a definite Woody Guthrie vibe about Rae Spoon. Not only does he write spartan ethical, social and political commentaries with dust bowl images, he also lives in a van. "My insurance is my rent," he tells Patrick Langston*

The prophet Elijah floats through a song about sterile suburbs and hazardous amusement parks. Woody Guthrie, SUVs and a chicken slaughterhouse rub elbows in another tune. A little later, John Henry and his wife Annie Oakley are battling a condominium corporation hell-bent on taking over their farm. You'd swear you'd stumbled into a scene written by Bob Dylan, circa *Blond on Blond*.

Fact is, you're listening to *Throw Some Dirt On Me*, the debut full-length album by Vancouver's Rae Spoon. Fearless in blurring lines, whether lyrical or musical, 22-year-old Spoon also has a flair for metaphor, melody and phrasing. He's got one heck of a voice. Oh yeah, he knows his way around a guitar and banjo, too.

Rae Spoon, while dressing as a male and preferring the pronoun 'he', is a woman. That would be irrelevant, except it can be confusing when the person on the album cover looks male while the voice inside is not just female but gorgeously so, big and torchy like Neko Case's at times, high and lonesome at others. It also speaks to the fluidity, the gathering under one roof of disparate elements, that characterizes so much of Spoon's music.

Spoon calls his music 'new skool folk music' and 'new old-timey music'. Add country to the description and you've just about got it nailed. With the kind of cross-over talent spilling out of the west coast these days (think the Be Good Tanyas and Po' Girl, among others), Spoon's barrier-free music should come as no surprise.

"There's all types of shows I go to where I'm with more like pop-rock people. There's a lot of that going on, lots of different genres just kind of hanging out," says Spoon, adding that, although a recent convert to country music, he's a longtime fan of folks like Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie.

Guthrie and allusions to the dirty thirties, in fact, pop up three or four times on the album, touchstones that pluck Spoon's music out of the purely here-and-now by underscoring the historical continuity that underlies all music and the universality of human experience.

"I wanted to reference it, because I don't hear a lot of references to that from people my age," he says, talking to the central image in the tune *Dust Bowl*, a song that links a dying relationship with withering crops.

"*Dust Bowl* is a relationship metaphor. The dust bowl, they couldn't stop it, because they didn't plant trees. It's the same kind of thing in a relationship. It's not being prepared for something. It's not being aware of the force of something and by the time you're aware, it's too late."

Relationships, essential to life but too often just beyond our reach or treated cavalierly once we latch onto them, underpin much of Spoon's album.

They're the essence of songs like *Box Car* and *Tin Shack*, both of which deal with love's simulta-



Fashion victim: Rae Spoon

neous fragility and staying power. *Tin Shack*, for example, opens with a vignette of betrayal - I've got a mouth full of wooden teeth/I've got a Xylophone smile only for her/But I let someone else play me - but winds up with reconciliation, as the lovers hunker down together again to the unexpectedly comforting "sound of rain on the mobile home roof."

It's a folk-pop song full of rhythmic twists and turns, lyrical surprises, melodic change-ups, one that keeps catching the listener off-guard just as the narrator is tripped up first by his own unfaithfulness and then by his lover's forgiveness.

Michael Owen Liston and Diona Davies, two of the album's many backing musicians and guest artists, keep *Tin Shack* moving forward with double bass and violin respectively.

For all its musicality, *Tin Shack* is, like the rest of the self-produced album, spare. Spoon's voice, some restrained instrumentation, the occasional backing vocal, and that's it.

"I didn't want to go outside of my means. I'm young and it's my first record, and I just wanted to do it the way I sound on stage with my friends. I listened to Bob Dylan's first record, Paul Simon's first record, all the folk singers, they're pretty pared down. Maybe when I'm thirty, I can have a drum program or something."

Like early-days Dylan, Spoon dips into social commentary, turning his sights on everything from corporate-government collusion to American hegemony. A strong ethical vein runs through Spoon's music, but he nimbly avoids righteousness while his humour protects him from the shrillness and earnestness that can dog folkie protests.

Being Spoon, he also often ties objective commentary to a subjective love story, not so much softening the impact of his critique as showing how inextricably linked seemingly divergent events and emotions

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really are.

Microsoft might be the object of Spoons scorn in *Hoe Down*, but the song opens with pure infatuation: "The first time I saw you the planet flipped." And when John Henry and Annie Oakley go toe-to-toe with that condominium corporation in the album's closer, John Henry, time becomes fluid in the face of the old, universal battle between the big guy and the little guy.

Spoon, whose current home is his van – "my insurance is my rent" – wasn't raised in a leftist or even a musical household. The product of a Christian family, he's now, judging by the song *Crop Duster*, anything but Christian. In that tune, a teenager is cut off from the world by a fanatically religious father: "Pappy nailed the windows shut to keep the evil outside/And turn our home into a holy prison." The song's origin? "I don't know if I'd rather discuss it," says Spoon, admitting that the song is "pretty close to home."

The unexpected being one of his chief artistic tools, it should come as no surprise when Spoon ends the interview by praising Garth Brooks, often touted as the penultimate in country music insincerity.

"I really like *Friends In Low Places*. If my friends haven't seen me in a couple of months, I like to cruise up their driveways with that blasting. They think I've lost it."



## Hard Travelin'

*Tom Lanada and The Paperboys won a Juno in 1998 and have continued to blaze their own unique trail across planet roots ever since. Their new release, Dilapidated Beauty, clearly sets them off on an all new daring adventure. Roddy Campbell goes along for the ride.*

Not exactly a shrinking violet, that Tom Landa. Not when it comes to reinventing the Paperboys.

Remember *Postcards* and its Cajun, Latin, flamenco, bluegrass and world beat backdrop? Yeah! Well your man Landa has gone right off the deep end this time around. *Dilapidated Beauty* – his latest release and a double disc no less – features a brass section, pedal steel and Hammond organ as it flits back and forth between Southern California country, Texas swing and gospel.

Clearly not the Celtic acorn from which that mighty oak, the Paperboys, sprouted. But for all that, *Dilapidated Beauty* is all rather fetching, especially disc one, which owes much of its inspiration from the early Orange County, California, sounds associated with the likes of Jackson Browne, and The Eagles.

"Side one, yes, it's stylistically country, but it is also a mellow record. It requires a quiet setting," says Landa. "I purposely went into that Southern California country thing. That's sort of a big part of the sound that inspired the making of this record, that sort of early 1970s stuff."

"But it didn't just come from the country side of things but also pop. Take a look at Van Morrison's



The Paperpersons with Tom Landa in the middle

body of work between 1970 and 1975. I think that was his best. If you look at Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, that was 1971. If you look at classic Eagles, that was early 1970. For some reason I was very inspired by that period."

The inspiration for the gospel content on disc two also requires several name checks. Morrison again gets a nod as do The Staples Singers. But ultimately it really all boils down to Landa's infatuation with early Motown and Stax, and in particular the phenomenal singing of Sam Cooke. Cooke sang *A Change Is Gonna Come* – Tom Landa's records clearly abide by these sentiments.

"I couldn't be happy just playing one style of music all the time. Everybody out there is probably passionate about one style of music but it doesn't mean they don't enjoy other styles. Irish trad musicians don't just listen to Irish trad music. They listen to everything from Björk to David Gray. And though their music doesn't reflect that, their musical taste does. So I've taken it one step further – it's not only the stuff I listen to but it's also the stuff I want to play."

Like *Postcards* before it, *Dilapidated Beauty* has the common thread of travel stitching it together – mostly its about places and people met on the road. While Landa writes little on tour he clearly savors his experiences. The title-track is set around Big Sur, California. *Blue Highway*, *Windshield Cracks*, *Omak Hotel* and *Lillooet* – a small, beautiful, BC, logging town on the Fraser River – all merge into this travelogue.

"People write about Texas all the time. I wish I had a dime for every song written about Texas. But Canadians, we don't do that that much. And on this record we do, which is a real country tradition. We talk about places. *Lillooet*, *Omak Hotel* and *Blue Highway* talks about Canadian place names."

Tom Landa was born in 1971 in Mexico City. The youngest of three children, he grew up in a home rife with domestic violence. Constantly abused, his Canadian mother finally left her Mexican husband and returned to her family in

Thunder Bay, Ontario. Tom chose to follow. *Devil Away* on his debut disc, *Late As Usual*, starkly outlines the contempt he felt for his father. Ten years later, these thoughts still remain. By *The Hand of My Father* provides *Dilapidated Beauty* with some of its most frank and moving moments.

"Two things happened about the time I wrote that song. One, I was in a hotel room and there was a couple fighting in the room next door. The fight became physical and I automatically went back to that place in my childhood. And about a month later, I was having a visit with my mum and having a conversation about many things. The conversation came around to her relationship and she told me a lot of things that had happened that I didn't really know. It just sort of upset me at the time. I came home from lunch, there was nobody around the house and I picked up a mandolin and that song came very, very quickly."

Inspired by Spirit of the West's Celtic roots-rock, Landa moved from Ontario to Vancouver and formed The Paperboys in 1992. Ironically, the Spirit's flute and whistle player Geoffrey Kelly now records and tours with The Paperboys on a casual basis.

While *Late As Usual*, released in 1995, was a solid if unspectacular debut, *Molinos*, the follow up, provided a giant leap forward. Duh! It earned a Juno for the best roots traditional recording in 1998 in the group category.

"We worked really hard on that record. We were happy with the result. Listening back, there's a lot of stuff I can't even listen to now. But it was great for the industry to say a job well done. It gave us a lot of confidence. It helped us get gigs. At that time the band was still building. There were nights when we played to a packed house, but most of the nights we played to houses that weren't quite full."

The equally wonderful *Postcards* followed two years later. "File under Celtic, bluegrass, world-beat, Latin, pop," it said on the sleeve while failing to mention the Cajun content.

"I didn't set out to make a worldbeat record but



the next thing I knew, thematically, it was going somewhere. It was talking about world travel; places I've been; situations to do with different ethnicity's and styles of music. That's where the whole idea of calling it *Postcards* came from," Landa told Penguin Eggs at the time.

As he continues to broaden his horizons, his Celtic leanings diminish with each subsequent recording. *Dilapidated Beauty*, offers mere hints. Live, though, it will remain very much a key aspect of their performances, he promises.

"I want to represent this record as much as budget will allow and we'll still fit in a few reels and gigs. People are coming to see the show, and they not only want to hear the stuff from our new record they will want to hear stuff from our past. I'm not being picky. We're now not only a country soul band, we are also a Celtic and Latin band that can play bluegrass"

You've been warned.



## Train A Comin'

*Ray Bonneville needs room to roam. He keeps residences in Arkansas and Quebec and makes records when the stars are aligned – five in the last decade including a Juno in 1999 for A Gust Of Wind. His latest, Roll It Down, is his strongest work yet, reckons Bruce Deachman*

It's a small anecdote, but a telling one. Ray Bonneville is out somewhere, looks at his watch and remarks, "I've got to get home." Then he stops and realizes what he's just said; home, on this particular occasion, is another motel along the road.

It's a fitting description for the 54-year-old country bluesman's career. It's been about time and distance, about stops punctuated by the spaces between them. There's no single destination, but

rather a series of them: Wisconsin one night, Chicago the next, Thunder Bay and then Texas. You mighta heard his songs. Passing through your town. Never slowing down.

"I don't see how you can play music and not travel," said Bonneville from a Motel 6 recently. "I love to play music. I have to play music, or be unhappy."

With a pair of guitars – an Epiphone Century and a Gibson Melody Maker, both 1961 vintages – in tow, and a harmonica around his neck, Bonneville has been playing what he calls a "gumbo of American roots stylings" for some 30 years now. It's a beautiful stripped-down sound, his thumb-and-index finger picking-style providing both rhythm and harmony, each accentuating the easy feeling behind his ambling voice.

Five albums of music over the past decade, culminating – at least so far – with this year's *Roll It Down*, have given listeners an unhurried train ride through the towns and hearts of what it is simply to be. Like the steel-rail journey, Bonneville leaves ample room for our imaginations, to fill the gaps with our own experiences.

"I love space," he admits. "Usually when I get a song that I feel is about finished, when I go to fine-tune it, I'm taking stuff out."

A fan of Cormac McCarthy's emotional and stark, gritty Southern novels, Bonneville, who maintains residences in both Montreal and Arkansas, credits his time in New Orleans for much of his love of the empty in-between.

"Subconsciously, I was already in love with spaces, just by being in love with Hank Williams and people like that, 'cause they like spaces.

"But in New Orleans, I really learned about taking my time and not filling in the holes and letting it be. Down there, I heard people playing in such a greasy way that I realized that nobody was trying

to be complex; they were just going for the importance of the melody. I fell in love with the idea of just a couple of notes to say what you want to say, and let the listener imagine the other notes."

In both style and attitude, it's hard not to compare Bonneville to another Canadian-moved-South: Daniel Lanois. They both ride turbulent undercurrents pockmarked by suspiciously calm waters.

A Juno award-winner for his 1999 *Gust Of Wind*, Bonneville's early influences run a gamut of country and blues. A 20-year-old living in Boston (he's lived in places as disparate as Colorado, Montreal, Alaska and Paris, France), he began to discover the likes of Little Walter, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, James Cotton. Paul Butterfield and Charlie Musselwhite, propelling him into the blues.

"At the same time," he says, "I was getting exposed to Hank Williams (Sr.), listening to George Jones, Patsy Cline and Etta James. Mississippi John Hurt, Lightnin' Hopkins...that stuff was really stirring me pretty bad."

For the longest time – until about a dozen years ago – Bonneville opted to interpret other artists' songs, putting his own groove into fairly obscure songs. "I wrote a few things," he concedes, "but if you asked me if I was a songwriter, I would say no."

In his early 40s, however, he began writing songs, and fell in love with the process. Gradually, his live sets filled with original material, as, bit by bit, he dropped the covers.

"I just thought it was time for me to be my own writer," he says of his relative late bloom into songwriting. "It's got to take its own time. It's like it was in there, but it wasn't ready, it wasn't cooked."

"I wasn't necessarily making an album. I just wanted to record some of these songs."

Months went by until, in Nashville, Bonneville played the tracks for Colin Linden, who liked them so much he invited Bonneville to his recording studio there to lay on some overdubs and record a few more cuts.

"Then I brought those tracks back to Montreal and Heaney overdubbed some things onto Colin's tracks. Then I had kind of an album."

Kind of? With Arsenault on percussion, one-time NRBQ bassist Joey Spampinato, Buddy Miller's drummer, Bryan Owings, and Richard Bell on the Hammond B3, as well as guitarist Brad Hayes, vocalist Jonell Mosser and even Linden kicking in on mandolin, *Roll It Down* is Bonneville's strongest work yet. His slide guitar is absolutely forlorn, his lyrics simple and visceral. Occasionally, it bounces, but for the most part it just hums along the rails, particularly on Bonneville's solo numbers.

And the train just keeps on rollin'. "There's nowhere I won't go or any time I won't go. That's what I do."

Passing through your town.  
Never slowing down.



Ray Bonneville



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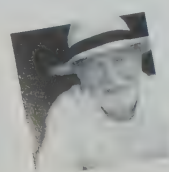
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Pieta Brown

## Deep Groove Thing

*Pieta Brown's life literally changed in a flash – a momentous, life-altering incident that converted a poet into a compelling songwriter. Roddy Campbell gets the skinny.*

She talks in a voice little more than a gentle whisper. He sits in stoney silence, speaks when spoken to, but offers little more than essentials. Sonny and Cher they ain't. But as a soft wind stirs the willows and fans the swans on the Bow River, Pieta Brown and Bo Ramsey gradually open up a little.

Brown, of course, is the oldest daughter of renowned American folk singer, Greg Brown, for whom Ramsey plays slide guitar when not making discs of his own or producing records for the likes of Lucinda Williams.

Last year though, he oversaw the recording of Pieta's self-titled debut disc – a tantalising, moody, cocktail that blurs the boundaries between J.J. Cale's country blues and Tom Waits' dark, lyrical, rural folk underbelly. And this spring Brown released the equally impressive, *I Never Told*. While Pieta wrote all of the songs for both discs, the latter features a gorgeously compelling, almost spiritual, cover of the traditional song, *Little Sparrow*.

"That's the version I learnt from my dad. I sing different words than he does but I got the melody from him. That is just the way a folk song works. That song has always touched me deeply," says Pieta in a quite corner of Prince's Island Park in the heart of Calgary. "I grew up with those old folk songs, listening to my dad's music and my great-grandparent's music. There was just a lot of traditional songs around... So it was natural."

Pieta was born in Iowa City but her parents split when she was two and she went to live with her mother – a medical student – who, upon gradu-

tion, moved her family south to Birmingham, Alabama. By her teens, Pieta reckons she lived in 20 to 30 different houses and rarely saw her father.

"It wasn't special having Greg Brown as my dad. I didn't see him as a kid, so there's all kinds of mixed up things. But we get along great now."

With her mother spending countless hours as an intern, Pieta's childhood was largely spent in solitude. And yet she found a certain solace writing poetry and playing the piano. Fellow poets pointed out her writing had a musical quality. While she never attempted to have her poems published, they eventually turned into songs. "I think maybe the poems always wanted to be songs," she says. "It's hard to say... I never tried to get my poems published before so maybe it was my path."

Whatever, the melting beauty of the likes of *Blind Dog Yell*, with its tragically sad, pleading refrain: "Pappa come on, home..." offers an insight into a lonely past. And yet Pieta Brown still sees the frailties and familiar in others, which makes her lyrics universal rather than personal. A case in point: *Nobody's Rose*.

"I feel it's a southern Iowa song. My grandmother, my dad's mom, and his whole family were from southern Iowa. It's really beautiful down there but it's also lonely out in the hills. My grandmother, my dad's mom got out of there when she was quite young. I know a lot of people in small-town Iowa that had to get out as fast as they could. And I was driving one day down around there because my dad lives there now. I saw this woman and she was driving shotgun in this old beater of a car. This beat up looking dude was driving her and she just had that look in her eye. It was one of these things where you pass by somebody and you look eyes. That's where that song started. It's a mixture of these things."

By the time she had turned 18, Pieta, too, wanted out of Iowa. Broke but passionate about her writing, and also fascinated by Cajun music and its Canadian roots, she moved to Quebec City, rented a room in the old quarter, took French lessons and immersed herself in Acadian folk songs.

"It was a very lovely time in my life," she says.

She would later move to Chile and Mexico. Three years ago, however, her life changed irrefutably. While Pieta had learned a few chords on the guitar over the years, she felt intimidated by her father's prowess. But on a visit to his house in Iowa, he pulled out his latest acquisition.

"My dad got out this little Maybelle. It's an archtop made in the 30s or 40s, a really beautiful guitar... I felt it – a flash is a good word, it felt like that. And then one thing led to another and I just kind of followed the guitar blindly."

"I've known Pieta for a long time," says Bo. "So when she started writing songs and playing guitar, which is not all that long ago, what is going on here is quite stunning when you put it in perspective. When I think back, on how I'd been playing guitar after three years, you know, it's really quite something that's taken place here."

Bo Ramsey also grew up in and around Iowa City, rising to prominence fronting local blues-rocks combo, The Sliders. His reputation as a guitar slinger would later earn him recording assignments from performers as diverse as Ani DiFranco, High And Lonesome and Lucinda Williams – most notably on her 1998 Grammy Award-winning disc, *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road*. He also played and produced her *Essence* three years later.

Greg Brown recruited Bo Ramsey as a guitarist in the late '80s. He would eventually share co-production credits on several of Brown's latter recordings. And so when Pieta first thought of recording her songs in 2001, she, naturally enough, sought the advice from family and close friends.

"When I got the songs together, I sent them to Bo to see if he thought they were worth recording because I respect his ears a lot and his playing. So that first record, Bo was very much the producer... I was terrified and excited in the studio with a bunch of musicians I respected. I was just focussed on getting the songs down and by the second record I had more of an idea, more of a vision."

"I never really thought about playing folk music; I just started writing songs. People put me in that category, I guess, just because I play an acoustic guitar and sing. I'm not sure I fit in quite right. It's the music that comes out of me. I don't worry too much about where it was going; I just did what I felt."

"I'm a big fan of music that comes from that deep groove. I like a song that has one chord as much as I like a song that has seven, or eight, or ten. It's just that deep groove thing and I think Bo and I really connect in that place."







Oh Susanna

## Nettwerking

The dark, dark songs that drew comparisons with the likes of Gillian Welch no longer take precedence on *Oh Susanna's* latest upbeat release. "Bazil (Donovan - her bassist) said 'I'm not going to make another album of waltzes,' so I said, 'fine, you bastard!'," she tells Kerry Doole.

Oh Susanna - Suzie Ungerleider to her mum - appears on a roll. She just bought her first house. She fell in love. And after years toiling as an independent artist, she recently signed with Nettwerk Records, home of Sara McLachlan, Avril Lavigne and the Barenaked Ladies. That will ensure a promotional push behind *Oh Susanna* her third album, following much-lauded *Sleepy Little Sailor* (2001), *Johnstown* (1999) and her self-titled debut EP (1997).

Though fighting the vestiges of jetlag, Suzie was in a good mood for a late summer chat in a favoured Toronto coffeeshop. She had plenty to talk about, and plenty of reasons to be cheerful.

She'd just returned from more gigs in England, a territory that's long been a happy hunting ground. In fact, her new album was released there long before its release in North America.

"We toured there in April and May with a full band and Stephen Fearing opening, then returned as a trio in August," she reports. "In April, we played small town pubs and then two nights at The Borderline in London. The reception was great. If audiences there don't really like you, they just won't make a big fuss, but when there is a good response, it feels really genuine. You get heckling and comments from the audience, and they're usually very witty and often quite personal. They talk to you as though you're drinking with them at the pub, and that takes the barrier away. They are creating with you rather than just you entertaining.

them or having to make them feel as if you're getting inside their minds or something."

Critical reaction to her new album has been almost unanimously positive (four stars in Mojo and Uncut), as scribes have accepted Oh Susanna's gradual move away from folk meets alt-country. Spurred by a band featuring some of Canada's best roots rock players, Suzie has ventured into both soul and guitar-fuelled rock terrain, with real conviction and skill. *Oh Susanna* is both her most varied and upbeat album, and that's attributable to her current state of mind.

"Some of it is not as gut-wrenching, heartbroken or heavy or that dreamy thing," she agrees. "I am not in the same place as I was when I made that last album. I never feel like I want to make the same record. I grew up listening to people who have longevity and whose idea was to make an album that sounded different than the last one, like David Bowie.

"My tendency had been to write these downbeat and moody songs that matched my psyche at the time. But playing them with the band and feeling like I have more of a place in playing music, that heals that thing. Then what do you do? You can't just do this fake moody thing. That would be dishonest and I think the songs would be bad, just sort of formulaic and empty. I know I will get my ass kicked for saying this, but sometimes I will listen to Tom Waits and brilliant as he is, I go 'are you really in the same mood, the same obsession as when you wrote *Raindogs*, or are you just writing a Tom Waits song?' You can get caught in your own persona."

The self-confessed once shy and insecure Suzie is both more confident in her chosen career and also basking in the happiness of a strong relationship with a fellow musician. Coming up with new songs that reflected this contentment was initially daunting.

"I remember talking to Luke [Doucet - her guitarist] and saying, 'I guess I'm going to have to write some songs that are happy or groove-y or rock.' I had never really done that, but it was so much fun when we started to make the songs more like a rock band."

Fans of the melancholy Suzie will still revel in the moodier material on *Oh Susanna*, but the exuberant sound of the horn-driven *Right By Your Side* and the funky yet political *Cain Is Rising* really catch the ear and show a new vocal versatility. Her band encouraged the broader range. "Bazil [Donovan - her bassist] said 'I'm not going to make another album of waltzes,' so I said, 'fine, you bastard!'," laughs Suzie.

Earlier comparisons to the likes of Gillian Welch and Bob Dylan have little relevance here, though there is a haunting cover of Dylan's *I'll Keep It With Mine*. Instead, Suzie acknowledges influences from Stevie Wonder and her beloved Rolling Stones on some of the new tunes.

The stellar band featured is largely the same crew used on *Sleepy Little Sailor* - Blue Rodeo bassist Donovan (Suzie's longest-serving musical collaborator), guitarists Doucet (Veal) and Travis Good (The Sadies), pianist Bob Underwood, drummer Joel Anderson and producer/guitarist Colin Cripps.

They returned to The Tragically Hip's Kingston-area studio, The Bathhouse, though Suzie recalls these sessions as more fractious. "This album was way more cranky, with way more disagreements. It was like we were a band and we were going to get mad at each other, say how we thought it should be. It was more tumultuous but that is a great thing. This is a record where the band is driving the music and I am the singer."

It took a while for Ungerleider to feel comfortable within a band. "After six years of playing together, it is really natural now. I am learning about how different instruments fit together and how people play music together. It is not just about me any more, and that is really exciting."

English label Hot Records funded the recording of *Oh Susanna* via a licensing advance, and Ungerleider is now in a solid career position.

"Fred Eaglesmith says it is really good to have this catalogue that is yours, and I own the masters to all the records."

Intriguingly, Nettwerk had courted Suzie back when she was based in Vancouver. "It was 1996, and George Maniatis was really enthusiastic. I was sort of intimidated by the whole thing, and decided not to sign a deal at all."

She did, however, lend George a copy of her beloved Stones *Let It Bleed* album. "He recently called me after all these years, saying 'I just found the record in my office. I'm also checking you out and I hear you've got a new album coming out. Can I get a copy?' Apparently they loved it and said they wanted to work with me."

The fact that Mick Jagger, a long time source of inspiration for Suzie, is obliquely part of the story of her new career boost is doubtless one she finds highly fitting.





## The Marshals' Plan

*The Silver Hearts drank like the Pogues until their livers gave out. But they still do a marvelous cover of their mentor Joe Hall's Whisky Talkin'. "He's held us by the hand. As we're pulling out of Peterborough he was there saying, 'Okay boys, look after yourselves,'" Brian Sanderson tells Roddy Campbell*

They spread across the stage like an errant posse. An even dozen on the day, they sport a colourful array of instruments — a theremin, sousaphone and saw for starters. In relatively quick order, they launch into Leadbelly's *Take This Hammer* and a nipp of joy sweeps throughout the crowd. The Silver Hearts put smiles on faces, there's nothing surer.

For the past three years they've played a weekly gig in The Montreal House, the oldest tavern in Peterborough, ON, that only recently installed a toilet for women. But this past summer, they visited the *West en masse*. Fresh air and festivals clearly suit their brazen combination of big brass, New Orleans based blues and intergalactic country roots rock. Cue the horse's mouth:

"It's got a turn-of-the-century folk-blues foundation. It's not purist by any means. I don't see anyone in the band wanting us to be a pure blues band or anything like that," says sousaphone player, Brian Sanderson.

"I mean in Ontario, after eight years of (premier) Mike Harris, it's not shocking that you want to play poor people's music. There's a real honesty to it, especially where we are at as a society. Again, it's not our bands aim to go back and recreate this music, but going back frequently and touching base with that ethic as a way to inspire us to write honest tunes. Honesty has to be at the top of the list, especially when you hear the pain in the blues."

While the sousaphone — a brass instrument similar to a tuba — certainly adds a unique dimension to the Silver Hearts, the theremin — one of the world's first synthesizers — comes across like some creepy sound-effect from an old sci-fi B-movie. Combined with dobro and pedal steel guitar, it places the Silver Hearts in the bearded lady, two-headed calf category.

"It does great things. It allows us to be a folk band but not feel like we are becoming such a folk band that we have to be folkies. The garage, punk element in our band we would lose if we trapped ourselves. I think the Theremin is one of the first things that makes us not a folk band necessarily."

An ensemble that large, of course, barely makes ends meet. So, for the most part, the various members pay their rent working in a local theater collective or in a variety of rock or punk combos. Loosely abiding by anarchist principles, most of the decisions they make are based on consensus. So when it came to selecting material, they initially agreed that all their songs required a mention of either silver or hearts or be written by a dead, blind person.

"Believe it or not, there was a time when this band was synonymous with early Pogues kind of behaviour — crazy, crazy, crazy behaviour. We almost lost our harmonica player. He had to stop drinking cold turkey or the doctor said he would die. Our banjo player had chronic pancreatitis and he almost lost his life. Anyway, there were a lot of drinking songs, all that by way of saying there was a lot of material about not doing the right thing. That was just profane."

Playwright and harmonica player Pat Walsh actually started the ball rolling in 2000 with a weekly gig at a local club in Peterborough. Walsh invited friends along and within no time their ranks had stretched to fifteen.

Soon they moved to the Montreal House and have pretty much played there regularly ever since.

"It's not very glorious but it has kept us going. Now it serves as a vehicle to charge ourselves and develop new material. It's a very low pressure gig, that's for sure."

In 2002, The Silver Hearts released their debut album, *No Place* — a real rag bag of originals and covers rife with delinquent charm. It includes the preposterous a cappella version of the traditional Irish ballad, *The Croppy Boy*, recorded outside in what sounds like a blizzard; a potential spaghetti western soundtrack or two; and a standout dixieland funeral march, *Locust Hill*. The highlight, though, is a wonderful cover of Joe Hall's, *Whisky*

*Talkin'*. Hall, a Silver Hearts' guidance counselor of sorts, is also from Peterborough and co-produced their live EP, *Take This Hammer*.

"The first reason to play his material is that it's excellent. He's a brilliant songwriter. The second reason is people might have missed it the first time around. Because it is Canada, people do fall through the cracks. I don't want to say Joe Hall has fallen through the cracks, but it behooves us to keep playing his material. If we are going to do cover tunes of anybody, it might as well be of people whom we know and love. He's held us by the hand. As we're pulling out of Peterborough he was there saying, 'Okay boys, look after yourselves'."

From The Montreal House, word spread further afield about this eccentric amalgamation that sported sheriffs or marshals' badges (a silver heart, in cowboy vernacular) on their lapels. They played Toronto's legendary El Macombo on its closing night and recorded Tom Waits' *Rain Dogs* live in its entirety at the nearby Trivoli. That disc will see a limited release in the fall. For the most part though, The Silver Hearts will stick to gigs within reasonable driving distance of home.

"Because it's a labour of love you're not going to drive five hours one way and five hours back with \$20 in your pocket at the end of the day and not have a good time. Right? ... Don't get me wrong, we work hard and we're good. We are so happy that other people have taken up the cause and decided that we are good enough. ... And if we are being cocky or whatever, we are being that way out of the need to perform. In our hearts it's not lost on us. We appreciate the fact that it's a small scene and we are being embraced in it."

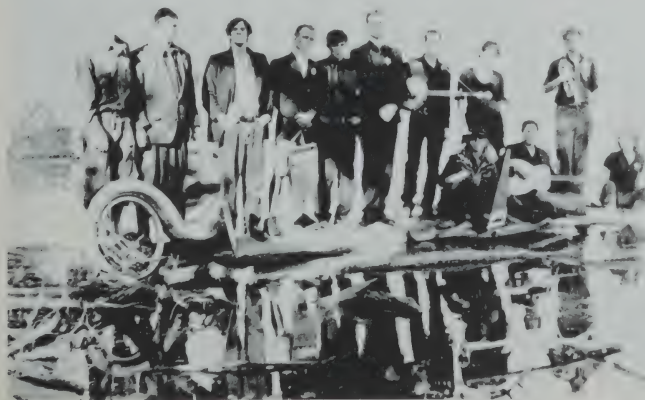
## Hynes Sight

*Newfoundland's Ron Hynes wrote one of the best known folk songs in Ireland. He reckons he was once the most bootlegged singer in Canada. For all that, his latest disc, Get Back Change, is a career-breaking album, writes Paul-Émile Comeau*

Ron Hynes became Newfoundland's songwriter laureate after writing *Sonny's Dream*, a song about how the world at large lures young people away from rural regions. In spite of the song becoming Newfoundland's unofficial anthem, Hynes didn't rush to cash in on that early success.

There have been 160 covers of the song, including one in Japanese and one in Portuguese, not to mention versions by Hamish Imlach, Mary Black, Christie Moore, and Jean Redpath. The song has become so widely known in Ireland that many from that country assume that it's an Irish song. Ireland is also one of the few foreign countries where Hynes has performed.

"Like Ireland, Newfoundland has given its best to the rest of the world. For our part, we still cling



The Silver Hearts

to this rock in the Atlantic," explains Hynes.

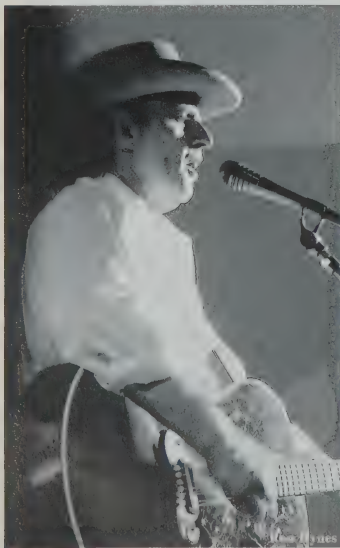
Although he started out working as a folksinger in St. John's in 1967, his early influences included such pop icons as Brian Wilson, Del Shannon, Roy Orbison and, of course, Bob Dylan. Hynes released an album called *Discovery* on Audat/World in 1972 and a children's cassette called *Small Fry* in the mid-80's but, apart from those two virtually unknown albums, he only launched his career as a solo recording artist in the '90s.

During the '70s and the early 80s, Hynes was a member of The Wonderful Grand Band, whose two albums from 1978 and 1981 featured some of his songs, *Sonny's Dream* showing up on both of them. Hynes then got involved in theatre and toured briefly with legendary comedy troupe Codco and in a one man show called Hank Williams: The Show He Never Gave.

"At one point I may have been one of the most bootlegged artists in the country, with some of my CBC Radio shows and theatre work making the rounds," Hynes claims. "I kept meeting people who had gotten a cassette from someone and who had in turn had passed it on to more friends."

In 1993, 21 years after his initial solo album, Hynes came out with *Cryer's Paradise* on EMI, an album that received well-deserved acclaim.

*Cryer's Paradise* reunited Hynes with Declan O'Doherty, who had produced the second WGB album, but this time the production was of a much higher quality. The country-tinged album contains some of Hynes' most popular songs: *Man of a Thousand Songs*, *No Kathleen*, *Roy Orbison Came On*, and *Atlantic Blue*, inspired by the Ocean Ranger tragedy.



Ron Hynes

Hynes' next album, also on EMI, appeared in 1997. *Face to the Gale* was a dark and gloomy album which Hynes refers to as "a Phil Spector folk album, one on which we tried to create a surround sound of emotion." He adds that the executives at the label called it "an artist's record and an album of career-breaking songs" but were initially reluctant to release it. The album's central theme is about loss. "It's about all the things you cherish that are slipping away...and about coming to terms with that loss." Fittingly, the album includes a new version of *Sonny's Dream*.

Another impressive Hynes album came out in 1997, one called *11:11 - Newfoundland Women Sing Songs* by Ron and Connie Hynes, all the tracks produced by O'Doherty. The title refers to eleven songs interpreted by eleven of the best women singers from Newfoundland, the only song drawn from an earlier Hynes album being *Picture to Hollywood*. A year later Hynes went out on his own to co-produce (with Sandy Morris) *Standing in Line in the Rain*, which is no longer available, and then put out *The Sandcastle Sessions*, a demo for the new Borealis album, albeit with some different songs.

One of the songs on *Get Back Change*, Hynes' impressive new album, is called *Record Man*, a sardonic view of the people running the record industry.

"The song title comes from a comment made by Anne Murray while accepting a Juno but the song has nothing to do with the people I worked with at EMI," Hynes explains. "They were fair to me and I have no cause for complaint."

Nonetheless, like Bob Snider, Hynes moved from EMI to Borealis. His new album was produced and arranged by Paul Mills and the sound is more organic and acoustic than his previous albums. The supporting musicians are an impressive cast and include Cindy Church, Sylvia Tyson, and Jenny Whiteley on harmony vocals, Dennis Pendrith on bass, Keith Glass on slide and electric

guitar, and Don Reed on fiddle, and the ubiquitous Curly Boy Stubbs on various string instruments.

The album leads off with the title song, the title referring to a mother's advice to her son who is about to move to the big city: "Cause you can spend and spend and spend/And never get back change/You're a fool boy was what my mama said. Hynes refers to the song, which alludes to Roy Payne, Dick Nolan, and Harry Hibbs, as "a cultural statement about expatriate Newfoundlanders."

There are recurring themes of nostalgia and longing for far off places in many of Hynes' songs. The *Sonny's Dream* theme crops up in several other songs, besides the title track. *No Change in Me*, for example, is the closing song co-written with Murray McLauchlan and deals with a beleaguered community and the futility of trying to make a living in such a place.

According to Hynes *The Ghost of Dana Bradley* is "a true story about the longest-running murder mystery in Canadian history. The victim was a young girl who was hitch-hiking home on her mother's birthday. The story received considerable media attention at the time."

*A Good Dog Is Lost* is an especially poignant song while *Valley Green* is a take-off on *Green Valley*—a traditional song found on an old Ian & Sylvia album. In Hynes' own words, *Dark River* is about "things that come to an end, sometimes before their time," a theme also found in *Godspeed*, a touching requiem for Gene MacLellan (from *Face to the Gale*) that was recently recorded by Damhnait Doyle, Kim Stockwood, and Tara MacLean.

Hynes wisely admits that "Popularity is fleeting but the songs remain." With *Get Back Change* both the man and his songs are likely to gain in popularity. To paraphrase the EMI executive cited above, "this is a career-breaking album."





SONGS OF

ENOCH KENT

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Photo: By Frank Gasparik

Horace X

## By Any Means Necessary

*They took their name from a Balkan dance and an African-American civil rights activist. Initially heroes to lonely math students, Horace X's glorious global amalgamation of disparate musical sources now clambers effortlessly across continents. Their tailor, though, could do with a day off.*  
By Roddy Campbell.

Horace X look totally knackered.

Understandable, really. The energy they spent at the Calgary folk festival could resuscitate Concord. Ani DiFranco danced like a devil to their madcap mixture of gypsy jazz, Irish jigs, Indian ragas, Jamaican toasting and punk posturing – as did everyone else that came within earshot.

The punters, many of them young for god-sakes, actually took to the trees for a better view of Horace X's standing o' mainstage set. Well, they do dress like extras from *The Mask* – an eye-watering blur of pink, lime green, orange, yellow and camo' that springs to life under black

(ultraviolet) light. Natty togs aside, not since the emergence of The Be Good Tanyas or The Waifs in the summer of 2001 has a debut performance created such a stir in these parts.

It's all a bit unnerving, really, because this quintet from Cambridge, England, have been around in various guises for the best part of a decade. They even nabbed a 1995 Mercury Award nomination for their self-titled debut. That prestigious UK prize eventually went to Portishead and their groundbreaking disc, *Dummy*. And yet, folk and roots dispatches from abroad made little mention of the fact. Very strange.

Fiddler Hazel Fairbairn and multi-instrumentalist Mark Russell formed Horace X in 1993, more or less for a joke, for a one-of charity fundraiser for the homeless. Obviously their fusion of techno and Irish and Balkan dance tunes made an impression; because, as often happens with these sorts of things, somebody asked them to do another. And before you could say, 'Taraf,' they had

formed a band.

Well, that's the abbreviated version. But let's face it, nobody starts a band on the spur of the moment with a bundle of tunes from Banat to Ballina. Certainly not anyone brought up in the industrial wastelands of Slough and Middlesbrough playing classical violin. Truly, Hazel Fairbairn grew up with scant exposure to traditional folk music. And the little she did hear? "It was pretty naff, actually."

Really, it was not until she moved to London to study musicology at City University that she became smitten with the traditional Irish fiddle tunes she heard in the pubs around Camden Town. So taken was she with the sessions she heard there that she spent five years traveling back and forth from Cambridge University to County Clare working on her doctoral thesis, *Anarchy In The Irish Music Session*. The thesis, of course, was all just a ruse. All she really wanted to do was learn fiddle tunes.

"To me the style of music is not important, it's more the process you apply. And really for me, it was that fantastic opportunity that sessions offer you, to kind of really get involved and play in a real situation while you are still learning. That helped me get absorbed in style and to pick music up by ear," says Hazel backstage in the festival green room nursing a jar, but minus the explosion of luminous chiffon head scarfs she saves for stage. "The classical thing is so based on what you read. It's a bit of a prison really. I always got very frustrated by it. But really, my whole reason for my thesis was wanting to learn how to play Irish music on the fiddle. The thesis was just an excuse to pursue that really. I'll own up."

Fair enough, but *Anarchy In The Irish Music Session*? Sounds like a Boomtown Rats comeback.

"When I was going over to Ireland, everyone was saying, 'It's a solo tradition. You want one guy on their own playing it.' And I was, 'Yeah, but everyone's sitting around in groups playing the stuff. I haven't seen anyone on their own playing it. What are you talking about?'"

"So it was about this solo tradition that kind of evolved into a group tradition. I was looking at the social reasons why that happened, which has a lot to do with rural depopulation and stuff like that, and looking to see how it has adapted by them all playing together."

"The alternative view is, it's a really smart way of getting funding to go and sit in a pub drinking a lot of Guinness hearing Irish music," says Mark.

Besides hearing the likes of Sharon Shannon play in pubs in the west of Ireland, Hazel also latched onto Andy Irvine's first solo album, *Rainy Sundays... Windy Dreams*. On it was the sublime Eastern European dance tune *Paidushko Horo*. She immediately took a shine to its delightfully eccentric time signature. Call it synchronicity... but around the same time, she shared a house in Cambridge with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger's son, Calum. Ewan and Peggy lived nearby and allowed Hazel access to their vast vinyl collection, where she discovered an old Rumanian recording. From it she took



a hora – a Hungarian dance tune in 5/16 time. They later nicknamed it *Horace*, which wound up on their self-titled debut EP.

"At the time, Mark was playing, I suppose you could call it dance. That was before the term was commonly used. He comes from a funk, hip hop, experimental background," says Hazel. "I'd been playing a lot of Balkan music, which I got into by hearing Andy Irvine. There was one particular tune called *Paidushko Hora*, which is a big Bulgarian tune in 5/16. I was messing around with that and Mark got interested because I think these asymmetrical time signatures were something new to him."

"We really got into all those weird time signatures like 5/16ths and 7/8ths and stuff. We played one or two in 1 and 4 and the dance floor would be just pumping. And we would play one in 7/16ths and everyone would be flattened against the wall and there would be one lone math student left freaking out in the middle. So we dropped all the ones with the silly time signatures."

"We had this idea," says Mark, "that people would go with it because it's interesting enough and it has a little bit of bounce. The British public were just not ready for odd time signatures."

Oddly enough, the Latin root for time is *hora*. And while we're at the train-spotting stage, it tickled them to discover that it was the Roman philosopher Horace who said "a thing repeated is

beautiful'. The X they nicked from black civil rights activist Malcolm X.

Mark Russell, incidentally, played on Ewan MacColl's very last recording.

"He was very ill when he was making it," says Mark. "It was quite a privilege to be involved with that. I sat in on a session called *The Naming of Names* – which was a record against the British Poll Tax. He was very interesting. He was describing growing up as a communist in London in the 1930s, working in experimental theater. He was a fascinating man."

Russell was born in Liverpool, England, grew up in the Sudan and Scotland and experimented with jazz, ska, dub, highlife and reggae. He even shared a bill at London's Lyceum with his hero, legendary producer, Lee 'Scratch' Perry.

"He checked me out in a mirror to make sure I wasn't a vampire – they have no reflections – and we then mostly discussed my dog who was named Scratch after him; though, I'm not sure he was that impressed by the notion," says Mark.

While living in London, Russell also worked with Community Music – an organisation set up to provide instruments and practice and recording facilities for inner-city residents too poor to afford such luxuries.

"The Asian Dub Foundation actually formed at a workshop," says Mark. "It was totally accidental. I think they're aged between 20 and 45 and they just all turned up for a workshop independently. And it just happened that the instrumentation, everything fitted together well, and they went on to form a band that is very successful. It's brilliant to see."

Mark Russell bought a fledgling sampler in 1990 and the first tune he wrote on it was based on *Fionnghuala* – a kind of Gaelic version of *The Wild Rover* – taken from the album the Bothy Band LP *Old Hag You Have Killed Me*. Horace X still play it live.

While Russell and Fairbairn earned a crust teaching, busking or dodging about with the odd band like The Bible, Horace X's self-titled debut five-track EP came out in 1994. "Tunes from Wallachia, Azerbaijan, Kosovo and Turkey; excavation by Hazel," it says on the back cover.

Veteran BBC Radio radio personality, John Peel, latched onto its 'tunes from the East, beats from the West.' And of course, it also received a 1995 Mercury Award nomination for recording of the year.

"We didn't hear about it until ages afterwards," says Hazel. "Retrospectively we were really pleased because at the time we were sending stuff out to the record companies; most of the reactions we got were, 'We love it but we wouldn't know where to start selling it. We just don't hear how you could market it.' So yeah, we were really delighted that somebody had actually shouted out for us."

By now Hazel had also taken to East Indian music. She studied under Chandru – a violinist and arranger for Bollywood Strings, who has recorded with the likes of George Harrison and Björk. Fairbairn now plays a five-string electric fiddle. The extra low string allows an open Indian tuning and provides a bit more depth across the instrument.

The release of a second EP, *Fish Don't Bark*, in 1996, saw the inclusion of Bosnian, Serbian and



Pete Newman

Croatian fiddle tunes. But *Burst Peacock* – their first full length album – three years later, proved a major departure. For the first time, they included vocalists – more precisely, Terminator Bones and Simon Twitchin – a duo grounded in old school reggae and ska but also into Jamaican toasting, what North Americans now know as rap.

They had initially supported Horace X at a gig in Cambridge. On later bills, they began to experiment by partially combining their sets.

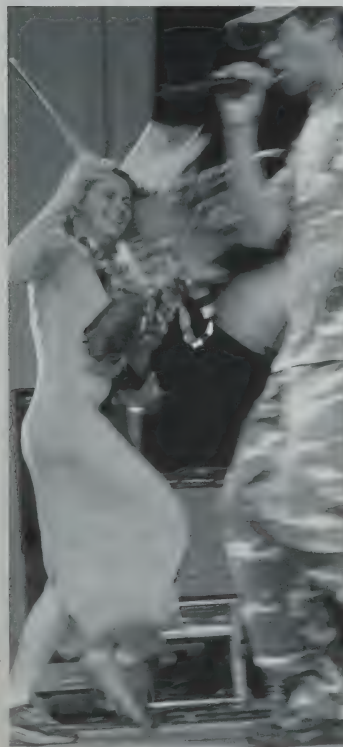
"We had this quite strong live band," says Hazel, "but we were probably quite boring, in terms of actual performance. We didn't really have any kind of obvious front person who was engaging with the audience."

"Simon and Bones, they had pretty much given up music at that stage. They were just really tired of driving around the country and sleeping in lay bys, doing gigs for certainly no more than expenses. Every time we did a gig together it worked and we were getting good responses and it developed from there. And I think it made us a lot more accessible to most people. It tied in well with the sort of reggae influence that Mark had already been working with."

While Terminator Bones has since left because of family commitments, Simon Twitchin remains a key element in Horace X, even though his thick Caribbean accent requires close scrutiny.

"That comes from listening to Jamaican reggae from the early eighties, people like Yellowman and Ecomouse, and from England, people like Smiley Culture and Macca-B – the fast style of toasting as it was called in those days," says Simon. "I would just start rapping on top of the B-sides of the records. Jamaican records always have the instrumental on the B-sides. So I was collecting vinyl and chatting along to the instrumentals, yeah. I always loved the Jamaican style rather than the American style of rapping. You're riding the rhythm in a slightly different way that's more natural to me. I like the way you ride the rhythm."

Fabian Bonner on five-string bass and Pete Newman on clarinet and baritone sax complete a



Hazel Fairbairn and Simon Twitchin

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BOOKS  
Autumn  
2003

## Feature

premier division lineup clearly on top of its game on the recent live *Sackbutt Folk Spoil Sunday*

The clarinet, of course, plays a key role in the Balkan tunes. Coming from an acid jazz and jump jive background, Newman had adjustments to make, for sure.

"I had to think quite a lot," says he. "There's a lot of strange scales and strange keys. It's been a learning experience."

"We're all involved in different areas of styles," says Hazel. "Pete and Fabian are into funk and jazz but it's really Mark in the studio who pulls all that together to create the Horace X sound, which isn't any one ingredient, it's a combination of all of them."

Yeah, but you want to meet their tailor. All of them wear the most outlandish, highly visual gear imaginable. Not quite Sgt. Pepper-era Beatles, but not a kick in the arse off it either.

"We were an instrumental band, a bunch of musos who stood and played our instruments. It wasn't vi-

sually exciting," says Hazel. "The first time we tried it was to a bunch of hippies saying, 'We're really into music; we'd really like to paint you up and put some black light on you.' And we said, 'Yeah, sure.' So it took about four hours to put the paint on and it all sweated off half way through the first number. We looked like road accidents for the rest of the gig. But it did get us thinking."

"Under black light, it's a very dramatic effect. I had this idea that rather than watch a bunch of people play musical instruments we'd try and get some kind of moving sculpture into it. It was just to try and get some of the energy of the music into the presentation. It's good to put on a show."

As for possible apprehensions about playing with loops and samplers, spikey orange hair and punk and dub swagger at a folk festival? Nah, there's nary a snigger.

"People who are into folk music, for some reason, are open to a lot more new ideas," says Mark.

"Folk fans aren't fashion victims. They aren't looking over their shoulders to see if it's fashionable."

Canadian folk festivals are fantastically run. They are amazing."



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Willie P. Bennett and the Bone China Band: 1973-74. Willie is on the right. John P. Allan is second from left.

## London '69 Revisited

*This is about the early folk scene in London, Ontario. From 1969 until 1980, London witnessed the best of the Canadian songwriters shouldering their way onto the stages of the country, and, in some cases, the world. Lots of important people are mentioned. Lots aren't. No one person put this scene together, it was a confluence of people and era. That is why it was vital and strong. If you are not mentioned here, don't have a cow, OK? It's only a magazine article. By Doug McArthur*

I just got in from the 30th annual Home County Folk Festival. A hundred thousand people passed through downtown Victoria Park over the weekend digging the afternoon workshops on several stages and the evening concerts in the central bandshell. The winding paths were peppered with craftsmen showing and selling. And food booths churned out international cuisine and delicacies. Almost every weekend of the summer, some large festival fills the park. These festivals have become a vital economic and cultural part of the city. Everybody loves Home County.

It wasn't always like that.

In 1973 the city allowed Victoria Park to be used only for events related to the Queen. The big trees were innocent of music and frivolity and the old WW1 tank at the North end of the park rusted with the squirrels. But nearby on Clarence Street, some rough beast was stirring.

The Ontario folk scene was equally unrecognizable. Exempting Mariposa, the few festivals that existed were small remote events. Hardly anyone had recorded — self produced albums were an idea of the future. The music was found in a necklace of small clubs strung along the 401: The

Riverboat, Shires, Fiddlers Green, Bohemian Embassy, Grumbles, etc. in Toronto; L'Hibou and others in Ottawa; The Razor's Edge and Bitter Grounds in Kingston; The Yellow Door and the Back Door in Montreal; Black Swan in Stratford; Ebony Knight and Knight 11 in Hamilton; some college pubs and halls.

The musicians moved through these clubs like locusts on the Prairie, all enjoying the rewards of being a big fish in several small ponds, all learning from each other, all unwittingly creating an identifiable body of work that spoke to the dreams and realities of Southern Ontario.

Some of them caught the brass ring of fame and glory. Some succumbed to the demands of mortgages and families or were ground into the dirt by the star-making machinery. Some paid for their ramblin' ways with their lives, victims of accident, illness or excess.

I was lucky enough to be a minor player in those now legendary times. I played all these clubs and I loved them all. But the one I keep close to my heart was Smales Place on Clarence Street.

The Fabulous Furry Smale Brothers (John, Bob and strange Jim) were seized by the odd notion of gutting an old Bell Telephone garage and turning it into a restaurant-cum-concert hall to provide an outlet for these wandering pickers. Through hard work, dedication and force of personality they attracted a workforce of dreamers and workers to make the scheme come true.

The club was a success, with suited businessmen lunching in the courtyard hoping to engage the eye of the lovely hippie girls they had heard so much about. London had a new scene.

It also attracted a mustachioed Robert Redford

look-alike (recently arrived from Austria) named Walter Grasser. Walter had met some friends who played music and although he knew nothing about the music business he had been inspired to open Track 4 Recording Studio just a few blocks way. Walter was a fast learner.

This new avocation had just dropped a plumb in his lap. Walter had been hired by the Student's Council at Western University to provide entertainment for the school venues, including the venerable 2,000 seat auditorium Alumni Hall.

Walter played the only two cards he had (he didn't know any other musicians) and started booking the traveling Smales Place performers as opening acts at the big hall. People loved it. He put a whole whack of them together one night and filled all 2000 seats. He did it again.

Valdy, Stan Rogers (Garnet on fiddle), Dave Essig, David Bradstreet, David Wiffin, Lazarus (just moved to town from Woodstock where they were under the thumb of Albert Grossman), Colleen Peterson, Michael Lewis, Brent Titcomb, many others including a very young and fresh Willie P. Bennett were on these shows and Paul Mills brought the power of CBC radio to support the concerts. The tapes exist today. They are magic.

Why not do it in the park?

Well, it had never been done before. In London that was often reason enough. Still, Walter and others formed a non-profit board with media types and influential people. Their mandate was to present Canadian Music in a yearly festival. Walter still had to have a shouting match with the PUC to get the power turned on Friday afternoon for the first show.

Some of the media jumped on the idea of dope smoking hippies polluting the Forest City and an undercover officer was sent to infiltrate one of the Sunday night concerts in Centennial Hall. One of the Perth County Conspiracy boys, hardened by years of in-fighting with authority, stopped the stage proceedings and demanded that the policeman stand up and identify himself. 1500 pairs of eyes turned to a long-haired narc who stood and sheepishly made his way to the exit. The crowd roared.

These Sunday night concerts were fantastic exercises in minimalism. Every act playing the festival got one song. No exceptions. Dan Hill or, well, Doug McArthur, it made no difference. In the spirit of joy and communal celebration we all secretly schemed to blow everyone else offstage. It was amazing.

London was a lovely closed garden - everyone lived close to the club and hung out there when not playing and worked up to the big festival in the summer. And the flowers grew - the number of songwriters

London, Ontario: circa 1969=1980

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PENGUIN  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

## Feature

that found their voice at that time was unprecedented.

News of the "scene" brought bigger names to the 125 seat club. Tom Rush, Bruce Cockburn and Murray McLauchlan played Smale's. Isn't that Lightfoot making a midnight run in his Porsche? Isn't that Leonard Cohen knocking Panzerotti next door at Mario's with Ken Palmer? Isn't that Joni Mitchell phoning for an old friend who works at the club?

Maybe it got too big and serious. At the end of a jammed two-show-a-night run at Smale's Tom Rush looked out at the audience and said "I understand you usually have a pretty nice little club here".

David Bradstreet had a big record with A&M. Stan Rogers was on the road in New England laying the foundations of an enduring legend. Valdy had a hit with Bradstreet's "Renaissance". Willie P. was sleeping on the stage at Smales. Laura Smith and Murray McLauchlan were learning to play the club piano. Colleen Peterson was off to Nashville.

The Smale brothers wandered west. John Smale felt the pull of the music biz and with his wife Joanne started working with Bruce Cockburn and other artists and festivals. He sold the club and it rolled back on for another year and a half.

Home County was taken over by artistic directors with a more traditional taste (Tom Siess, Alistair Brown, Rob Dean). The festival thrived.

Other clubs sprang up in London: Uncle Billie's and the Cookery. Smales was reborn in another location as Change of Pace and lived again for many years. Change of Pace was a continuation in many ways of the best of the Smales Pace idea and Annie and Carl Grindstaff deserve special mention for their years of dedication to the scene.

The Cuckoo's Nest waved the flag of traditional music through all this time and Bluegrass was a constant in the downtown pubs.

Ken Palmer took over as Home County Artistic Director several years ago and the festival now offers an incredible smorgasbord of folk, country, sea shanties and rock 'n' roll.

Now its thirty years later in the park and of course I look just the same, but all my friends are showing just a touch of grey here and there.

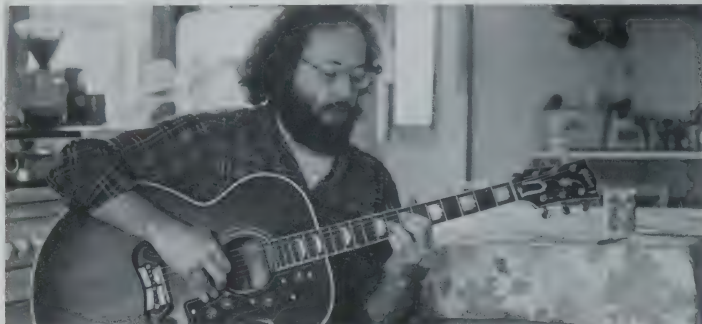
Dave Essig is churning up the blues at the next stage and all the stages are filled with incredible young performers. I am sitting on the grass talking to one of them – Kristin Sweetland (who wasn't born in 1973) – and my mind slips and maybe I'm in this spot talking to Colleen Peterson or Nancy Simmonds while Bill Hughes plays catch with Frank Wheeler, and Jonathan Round is chuckling at something, and Stan Rogers is grumbling because some one drank his beer while he was on stage. And Rob Lamothe (who belongs in 2003) breaks into my reverie: "That was funny, what Kristin just said."

I snap back into focus.

"Sorry Kristin, what was that?"

"I said my dad has all your records."

She smiled so sweetly.



Dave Essig in the corporate headquarters of Woodshed Records mid- '70s

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The New Lost City Ramblers: Tracy Schwarz, Mike Seeger and John Cohen

## Ramblin' Boys of Pleasure

*The New Lost City Ramblers were in the vanguard of the urban folk revival and integral in the preservation and re-newed interest in string band music. It's time they had their own commemorative US postage stamp, figures Ken Hunt*

Hearing the New Lost City Ramblers in the late 1960s, when the trio's music intruded into my consciousness soon after the Byrds and the Grateful Dead, was like finding something believed forever lost and the thrill that comes with finding it again. It was natural to have an empathy with their music. At that point, the Ramblers had been playing music together since 1958 and had even gone through two line-ups that had notched up four whole Ramblers. What stands out in the history of American folk music is that the NLCR never went away, even if every so often they took time out to play in other formations or pursue other agendas.

One of the things that distanced the Ramblers gloriously from the folk pack was how they soaked up and assimilated song and styles, music and mannerisms. Without wishing to appear critical of others' approach, whereas many other acts remodelled and turned out the old songs in their own image – Pete Seeger and Joan Baez are classic blueprints – the Ramblers were like sponges. That judgement comes groaning under the weight of hindsight and subsequent knowledge. Few could hear what they were accessing and assimilating. At first, only America's die-hard shellac retainers and its tape-trader sub-species had access to the Ramblers' old recorded sources. Gradually, a new breed of retentive emerged: the taper. Both of the proto-Ramblers John Cohen and Mike Seeger were out there taping even before the Ramblers were a twinkle.

Consequently, when they got going, they had access to a microcosm of forgotten commercial records and a world of more recent field recordings.

Tom Paley, Mike Seeger and John Cohen formed the Ramblers in the summer of 1958. Paley and Seeger visited Cohen at his New York apartment at 32 Third Avenue, later 'immortalized' (allegedly) in Dylan's curious-spurious liner notes to *Highway 61 Revisited*. Certainly, somebody called 'john cohen' got name-checked and John Cohen definitely took a line from Dylan's abstractions as the title of his fine book of photographs. There Is No Eye (2001) is a photographic record that includes b/w images of Jack Kerouac, Rev. Gary Davis, Macchu Tuscac dancers in Peru, a beardless Allen Ginsberg, Roscoe Holcomb, Dylan with Ralph Rinzler and John Herald, Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger.

1958 was a time of great flux in the US folk scene. No ghost of electricity yet haunted folk music, but there were other divisions. At one end of the spectrum, the Kingston Trio changed the face of folk with their striped shirts, Colgate smiles and collegiate folk. (Famously, when Frank Proffitt saw how "they clowned and hip-swinged" and heard what they had done to his *Tom Dooley* "tears came to [his] eyes"...and he "went out and bawled on the Ridge".) At another extreme there were the Ramblers and their old time and string band music and the Greenbriar Boys, another urban folk group of 1958 vintage and similar pedigree, in their case taking bluegrass as their lodestar. Neither outfit pretended to be dirt-poor country-folk. Both were products of New York and that meant they were about as citified as it was possible to get.

The Ramblers and the Greenbriar Boys were

the vanguard of a new movement, a wave of performers that took this music more seriously than anyone had since the New Deal administration had employed people to gather in America's folk harvest. What the Ramblers could not have guessed was how productive they would be.

Moe Asch of Folkways signed them up on the strength of their names, never even bothering to audition them. Of their debut album released before year's end, Mike Seeger says, "He recorded it himself in this tiny little studio with vintage microphones. Tom was working full time teaching. I was working full time as a recording technician. John was working partly on the Ramblers and partly on his own work. It was amazing how much we did while we [whispers] were being paid to do something else." By the end of 1959 they had four albums on the market, including *Songs from the Depression* and *Old Timey Songs for Children*. In August 1962 Paley left for academic pastures. That summer Tracy Schwarz began a tenure with the Ramblers that endures to the present day. His arrival began the second and current phase of the band.

The Ramblers alerted a new generation, their generation, to the continued presence of this music. They revealed new vistas of possibilities and provided a faultless blueprint for hundreds of acoustic string-band formations over the next decades. John Cohen observes, "When I started in academia, a huge amount of the faculty at the college where I was teaching knew the New Lost City Ramblers. Either they'd heard of them or they'd been to the concerts when they were graduate students. But there are more people who know of us than have heard us. I think."

One reason for this was the cost of Folkways records. "You talk about the price of Folkways' records," says Cohen on the eve of the Ramblers' first concert reuniting both line-ups of the group this June in London, "but they were expensive in the United States also. Moe Asch had a very curious thing. His office was on 46th Street and on 6th Avenue, just a block away, there was one record store where they sold all Folkways records but they had a hole punched in the label and they came without notes. They cost, like, \$2.00. There was a little note on them, saying that if you wanted to get the notes, send \$1.00. Folkways was just around the corner, right? Moe Asch used to say he loved it when these kids would come and say they'd love to get notes for such-and-such a record. He knew they'd just bought the cheap version. He was providing them with a system to get around his system."

The fact that the Ramblers are still playing is testament not only to their staying power, it speaks volumes about this music's ruggedness and eloquence in the right hands. If there were any justice in Bushland (open the irony sluice gates), the New Lost City Ramblers would be on a commemorative issue of US postage stamps for their positive influence on the world's appreciation of Americana and portrayal of US culture.

With apologies for Blair.

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New Lost City Ramblers

# Ani DiFranco



*The noughties ain't the sixties. In the face of a rogue administration that seized power by a coup d'état masquerading as democratic process, musicians in the US – and elsewhere in the west – have in the main been depressingly quiet. If they've felt a sense of outrage over the actions of Bush and his shadowy henchmen it hasn't found expression in song, statement, or benefit gig.*

*The situation has been particularly – and predictably – bad in the mainstream industry despite courageous exceptions such as The Dixie Chicks. The silence of rock, pop, and country stars should provide an opportunity for the folk community – largely free of fears about loss of airplay and album sales. But are the heirs of Woody Guthrie responding to the challenge?*

*Penguin Eggs sought out one of the most brilliant and outspoken songwriters of the past decade, Ani DiFranco, for a glimpse into the heart and soul of the US in the aftermath of the Iraq war. The Buffalo-based artist has a few things to say about life, art, and bull-shit in her increasingly insecure homeland. And for anyone who feels the in-*

*terview is too politically-focused for a music journal, I recommend swift immersion in Woody's Dust Bowl Ballads, then a dip into some early Dylan.*

*Questions by Tony Montague*

**In general how have you as an artist and as a person responded to the manifold threats of the Bush administration?**

I have the same response I've had my whole life, which is 'No way!' People have been talking a lot about censorship, its increasing incidence in our culture, and how scary that is, and I find myself stopping folks and saying, 'You know this country is not one where you're going to get shot or tortured for speaking out against the government. We're damned lucky. We have all kinds of rights and democratic opportunities that we choose not to exercise.' I think the American tendency to just bend over and self-censor these days is what we're really talking about.

People – other artists – ask me how I deal with that, speaking out in this climate. It's like, well, I've been doing that all my life (she laughs loudly). So the censorship with me is a given. It's a fact of my life – I've never really been played on the radio, so it's not a choice now between making a political statement or preserving my airplay. Ever

since I came of age, basically in the Reagan years, I've had nothing but a huge grey luminous enemy above me. So I respond I think the same way now as before.

**How vocal is the opposition to Bush in the arts community – especially the music community – where you live and where you've been in the US?**

It feels to me like, where is everybody? There are notable exceptions like Billy Bragg, like Michael Franti, out there not shying away from political realities, but I guess most of the inspiring activism and progressive opposition that I see is local community activism, which I think is the key that will eventually open the doors to some other future. I just read this amazing quote from Mussolini: 'Fascism should rightly be called corporatism since it is a merging of government and corporate power.' And that was 70 years ago or so!

People are always asking 'What do we do? How do we fight this huge evil?' The only thing I can come up with as the years go by is, you find someone else that's doing something good and you help them. That's probably in your home town. There's always all kinds of things that need fixing.

**Have you or any of your friends been harassed?**

Oh sure. I was playing at the New Jersey Performing Arts Centre a few months ago. There's political tabling of various kinds at my shows including anti-war, pacifist groups, and one particular group called Not In Our Name was going to set up a table out in the lobby, and the NJPAC people said 'No political tabling'. So we said, 'OK, we'll have them distribute info from our merchandise table.' And they said 'No'. So we said, 'we'll have the people come up and speak from the stage before I go on.' And they said, 'no'.

All afternoon and evening leading up to this show the production office was swarming with goons trying to intimidate us, trying to tell me I don't have the freedom to disseminate information, or say anything that I want to, or have anyone up onstage in my show. They said they were going to shut the power down if I allowed these people onstage, and they were out in the front of the house, behind the soundboard, ready to pull the switches. It was this big game of chicken.

In the end I said 'Fine, then shut the show down', and had three organizations come up and speak. There's a room with 2000 people in it, and they weren't about to do anything, because the people have more power just by their presence. So we won that one. But I feel strongly that the amount to which we are controlled is the amount that we allow ourselves to be – especially in a society as free and



privileged as this one. I think the excuses are few.

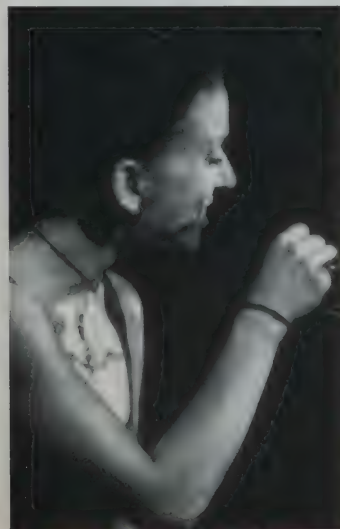
**So what do you think that Woody Guthrie would think and do in George Bush's America?**

Oh, what he always does. He was pretty clear about what his job was, and I guess I feel that about what I do and say. There are so many wars perpetrated by my government, and some are less obvious than others. Some are economic but equally as devastating. The similarities to Woody's time and place are huge. Same shit, different century.

**The majority of the songs on your latest release *Evolve* are concerned with your personal life and perceptions, but there's one outstanding politically-oriented piece, *Serpentine*. Can you tell me about that track, and the making of it?**

It's definitely the biggest, longest piece of music I've ever created. It took me months and months of pretty constant work to hammer that out of the huge monolithic rock of anger and shame and disillusionment, and feelings of helplessness, rage.... all the responses to the current American regime and the continuation and escalation of American violence worldwide. Not only is it not getting any easier to be an American, but I'm not getting any younger and I feel like I'm at an intersection in my life where I'm just about grown up. It's about my responsibility, coming of age in a country that's just careening into wrongness. And at the same time it's about a society coming of age and hopefully coming to terms with some of its fundamental behavioural problems. *Serpentine* is kind of constructed like a mirror, in a mirror, in a mirror with a tiny little girl in the middle and the macropolitical situation around her.

**What are you doing right now with your music?**



I have a whole other album of songs that I'm recording – a solo record, that's my new endeavour. It's just going to be me and my guitar for the foreseeable future.

**What caused the shift from working with a band?**

Oh many things. I could come up with a different reason for every conversation really, but it was just time. I'd learned so much from working with a band musically, and in all sorts of other ways, and then the balance was tipped and it was almost taking too much of my energy and focus which I wanted to dedicate to something more primary. So I think I'm taking all those musical lessons and applying them to songwriting and getting back in touch with the primary relationship between me and the audience. Not having so many people around me to worry about has been very focusing for me. I'm very grateful for it.

**Can we get a sneak preview of any new material?**

I have a new song called *Animal* that starts: More and more there is this animal looking out through my eyes/At all the traffic on the road to nowhere/At all the shiny stuff around to buy. I feel like there is really a sickness of the American soul, that has been bred into us through the propaganda of the TV, and this mutation from citizens to consumers, this complete disillusionment and detachment from the process of democracy. *Animal* is a song that tries to deal with the anger and the shame of it by recognizing that there's a bigger 'us'... the one that I see when I travel all over the world, and that's basically made up of the people, the workers, and the peaceable citizens of the world who simply want to live freely and safely, and have so many common interests that are separate and contrary to the interests of the rich elite. So it's a song about the true us, which crosses borders and spans continents, and includes all those people interested in mercy.

**What else are you doing at the moment?**

There's another sort of expansive poem that I've written called *Grand Canyon*, which I've been performing a lot. Basically it's about a different concept of patriotism to the one that's being shoved down our gullets these days, that sort of fascist idea of the patriot as a blindly accepting, silent, acquiescent, obedient, non-critical subject. I'm standing on stages every night and I want to inspire people – I agree with Woody that a song should inspire in whatever way, bring people closer to joy. So feelings like helplessness and shame are not useful things to lug on stage with you.

I wanted to write a poem that would inspire myself too. Why do I fight? Because I love my country. And why do I love my country? It's a poem about the people and the land, and a concept of the patriot as someone who fights governments. It starts out:



I love my country

By which I mean I am indebted joyfully  
To all the people throughout its history

Who have fought the government to make it right  
Where so many cunning sons and daughters  
Our foremothers and forefathers came singing  
through slaughter  
Came through hell and high water  
So that we could stand here  
And behold breathlessly the sight  
How a raging river of tears  
Is cutting a grand canyon of light.

I'm just trying to get in on the patriotic  
action (She laughs again).



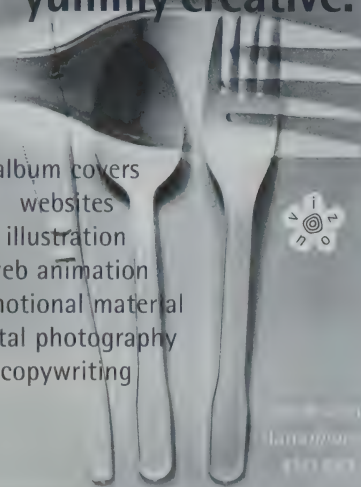
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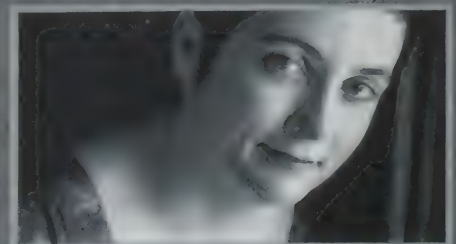
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<b>September 12</b>	<b>2</b>	Chip Taylor with Carrie Rodriguez (USA)	<b>January 9</b>	<b>2</b>	Le Vent du Nord (Quebec)
<b>September 26</b>	<b>0</b>	Cindy Church (Ont.)	<b>January 23</b>	<b>2</b>	Madrigia (MB)
<b>October 10</b>	<b>0</b>	Tom Phillips and The Men of Constant Sorrow (AB)	<b>February 6</b>	<b>0</b>	Lynn Miles (Ont.)
<b>October 24</b>	<b>0</b>	The Wailin' Jennys (MB)	<b>February 20</b>	<b>0</b>	Down to the Wood (AB), Tim Hus (AB)
<b>November 7</b>	<b>0</b>	The Arrogant Worms (Ont.)	<b>March 5</b>	<b>0</b>	Annie Gallup (USA)
<b>November 21</b>	<b>3</b>	Tanglefoot (Ont.)	<b>March 19</b>	<b>0</b>	Mick Stack Trio (AB) Joanne Myrol (AB)
<b>November 28</b>	<b>3</b>	Stringband (B.C.)	<b>April 2</b>	<b>4</b>	Stacey Earle & Mark Stuart (USA)
			<b>April 16</b>		Kieran Kane & Kevin Welch (USA)

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## Natalie Merchant

The House Carpenter's Daughter  
Myth America Records  
MA-1026

The subtitle provides the background: 'A collection of traditional and contemporary folk music.' While Van Morrison and Sinéad O'Connor have already covered similar territory, albeit from an Irish perspective, the results were far from convincing. But Merchant's been down this road before. Remember her wonderful cover of *Just As The Tide Was A Flowing* on 10,000 Maniac's debut *Wishing Chair*?

Well, the independently released *The House Carpenter's Daughter* opens with the somber reverence of Jeff Claus's *Sally Ann*. And it's a positive sign and a harbinger of sorts. While Florence Reece's *Which Side Are You On* lacks the emotional wallop it justly deserves, and Richard Thompson's *Crazy Man Michael* is haunted by Sandy Denny's definitive spirit, Merchant continually pulls bunnies out of her bonnet. The gorgeous, traditional *Weeping Pilgrim* turns melancholia into a fine art. Likewise, the equally graceful *Owensboro*.

The accompaniment, for the most part, consists of little more than a claw-hammered banjo and a fiddle—spartan, sure, but also hugely infectious. Which makes the full-blooded, raucous, Cajun, hooley, *Down On Penny's Farm*, a more rewarding yet welcome respite. All this persistent excellence concludes with a haunting and sensitive *Poor Wayfaring Stranger*. It's a fitting finale to a recording that truly deserves to be adored.

—By Roddy Campbell

## Charlie Angus and the Grievous Angels

Hanging Songs  
Jimmy Boyle Records  
2003-05

He used to be called Chuck and it was just the Grievous Angels. A lot has happened to them since 1999 when they released the wonderful *22 Trailer Park*. Charlie Angus has been involved a number of political wars against toxic waste and land exploitation, both among rural northern Ontario residents and with the Algonquin Nation in Quebec, especially a civil disobedience campaign against the Adams Mine Dump which threatened his rural region of Temiskaming. Drummer Pete Duffin retired from the music scene, Tim Hadley accepted a gig touring with Stompin' Tom Connors, and Peter Jellard found fulltime employment with the Toronto Cajun band Swamperella.

Now after three long years, Angus is back with a collection of new tunes, many inspired by his battles in northern Ontario. Backing him up on *Hanging Songs* are Angel veterans Hadley and Jellard. Joining them are guitarist/singer Dave Patterson who has been playing with Angus the last few years and drummer Al Lamore.

So the result of all this is a softer, gentler



Natalie Merchant

Angels' sound. It's as if they moved out from playing in the garage and out into the backyard. The songs are still beautifully written from the heart in a dark and simple fashion, but are rooted less in the electric guitar and more in the fiddle, accordion, and slide. Clearly the Angels have matured and taken a musical step forward.

There's no one in Canada that can write a song that'll tear at your heart like Charlie Angus. In *Annie and Me*, the best song on the album, he sums up a working life in these times in four great lines. "Annie is working late night again/they got her on contract and it's getting near the end/They say they'll keep her; we know how that goes/They'll bump her down to part time, oh down the road.

*Hanging Songs* is 12 wonderful tracks chronicling life in Northern Ontario and all that it entails. It also includes a great cover of Stompin' Tom Connors' *Reesor Crossing Tragedy*. Another gem, then, from the already great discography of Charlie Angus and the Grievous Angels.

—By Les Siemieniuk

## Tony Furtado Band

Tony Furtado  
True North Records  
TND306

This is possibly the best progressive bluegrass/roots CD to come along since the 2001 release, *The Wayfaring Strangers: Shifting Sands of Time*. Furtado takes traditional standards and makes them his own with unique arrangements and new interpretations of oft-played material.

Three such cuts stand out on the CD: the traditional *Raleigh and Spencer*, Bill Monroe's *Molly and Tenbrooks*, and Woody Guthrie's *I Ain't Got No Home*. All are slow versions lovingly re-invented with emphasis on the lyrics. Too often,

artists make the mistake of cramming as many notes as possible into this material. Here, it's all about the song.

Furtdao, a progressive banjo player who broke out of the bluegrass mould long ago, enlists the help of like-minded sidemen and vocal help from Kelly Joe Phelps. Furtado sings one cut with Phelps (*I Ain't Got No Home*) and one on his own (*Cypress Grove*). The latter is done with a suitably swampy feel with Furtado on slide bano and slide guitar. Instrumentally, Furtado also experiments with a hopped-up version of the difficult and little-played *President Garfield's Hornpipe*.

Instrumentation on the disc includes drums, accordion, xylophone, tabla, sax. Highly recommended.

—By Bob Remington

## Madrigaia

Viva Voce  
Festival  
SKU: PBM 741

*Viva Voce*, the first album by Winnipeg-based female a cappella group Madrigaia, provides a sampling of the songs from a number of ethnic traditions—Serbian, Croatian, Tamil, Hungarian, Yiddish, Hebrew, Mic Mac, and not surprising, given the group's Franco-Manitoban roots, French-Canadian. There is no attempt to be slavishly authentic in the interpretation of these pieces, but nonetheless the arrangements provide credible reflections of the spirit of the traditions from which these songs are derived. The six women of Madrigaia are skilled vocalists but manage to avoid the over-trained sound of classical

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singers, instead showcasing attractive, natural-sounding voices that blend together seamlessly. (For a rather quirky demonstration of what else these women can do with their voices, don't miss hidden track) Primarily an a cappella recording, judicious use of percussion and other sparse instrumentation adds to the appeal of the recording. An impressive debut that left this reviewer wanting to hear more from this young group.

— By Linda Slater

## Bill Garrett and Sue Lothrop

Red Shoes  
Borealis Records  
BCD154

There are several peculiar things about Canada's music business. One, there is a lack of musical interpreters—everybody's a singer songwriter and records only their own songs. And two, while we all know there are French and English music scenes in Quebec we seldom hear of them in the rest of the country.

After performing solo for years, Bill Garrett and Sue Lothrop from Montréal, have released *Red Shoes*, their debut album as a duo. It's heartening to see performers who are secure enough in their own writing and performing skills to reach beyond their own songs. Bill and Sue do include their three originals, *Red Shoes*, *The Hill* and *On Your Way Home*, but the majority of the album features songs by terrific Canadian songwriters such as Lucinda Chodan & Dave Clarke, Ron Hynes, Terry Tufts, and Shelley Posen. Even the inclusion of a Rodney Crowell's *Leaving Louisiana* owes its unique flavour to the vagaries of early Canadian history.

The resulting mix is a wonderfully produced album with a simple contemporary sound. Nothing fancy, just great acoustic guitar work from Bill, Dave Clarke, and Paul Mills and lovely, tasty fills from guest players including Grit Laskin on Northumbrian small pipes, Christina Smith on cel-

lo, Vern Dorge on clarinet, and Ottawa's Terry Tufts on Dobro, mandolin and electric guitar.

Bill and Sue's voices blend together beautifully, no matter who sings the lead. From *Un Canadien Errant*, to *The St John's Waltz*, to *The Hill*, a lovely song about growing up in Sherbrooke, Quebec, the material is timeless, beautifully performed, and very Canadian. And the liner notes are bilingual to boot.

*Red Shoes* is a graceful and classy debut from this duo. Hopefully it is just the first of many more to come.

— By Les Siemieniuk

## John Mellencamp

Trouble No More  
Columbia Records

Yeah, I know what you're thinking: "John Mellencamp? In Penguin Eggs?" Perhaps you tuned out sometime in the 1980s, when Mellencamp—or Johnny Cougar, or John Cougar Mellencamp, or whatever name he was going by—was filling arena concerts with his catchy rock songs like *Jack and Diane* or *Cherry Bomb*. Maybe you dismissed him as a poor man's Springsteen or, worse, a rich man's Bon Jovi. Fine. Whatever you thought of him then, it might well be time now to reacquaint yourself with the Indiana boy, for *Trouble No More* is one excellent disc.

From its opening notes—a little National Steel slide-work by Andy York on a cover of Robert Johnson's *Stones In My Passway*—this album screams traditional blues and folk, albeit punched up and electrified. But if Johnson, Woody Guthrie, Memphis Minnie McCoy, et al, were alive today, you'd like to think that they'd be bringing the same sensibilities to music that Mellencamp does here: shining a new light on the old standards.

Mellencamp brings his unmistakable, raspy voice and sonic tightness to a dozen songs, ranging from Son House's *Death Letter* and Guthrie's *Johnny Hart* to a wonderful rendition of Lucinda Williams' *Lafayette*. On a couple of traditional numbers—*Diamond Joe* and *To Washington*—he's added his own lyrics. His version of *Teardrops*

*Will Fall*, previously covered by artists as diverse as Ry Cooder, Wilson Pickett and Linda Ronstadt, is a gem, earning the 40-some-year-old song a ton of commercial radio play this summer. Buy it. Listen to it. Love it.

— By Bruce Deachman

## Kékélé

Rumba Congo  
Stern's Africa  
STCD 1093

Kékélé, as has been noted on a least one website, are the Buena Vista Social Club of the Congo. The eight-member group of veteran musicians have taken it upon themselves to recreate the golden era of Congolese rumba which reached its peak in the '60's. They are successful in their endeavour producing an album of laid-back but sophisticated dance tunes that can't help but get butts swaying and feet moving. The five singers (including long-time Congo favourite Nyoboma Mwan Dido) alternate lead vocals and when not singing lead blend their voices together in a languid, well-balanced chorus. The use of acoustic guitars (featuring among them the stylings of Papa Noël), the smooth as butter woodwinds (sax, clarinet and flutes) and the subtle rhythms of Latin percussion lend a gentle, 'warm summer breeze' feel to the album.

Though the music is a throwback to a 'Golden Age', there is certainly nothing geriatric about this album, and fans of both Cuban and Afro-Cuban dance music will find the music of Kékélé to their liking.

— By Linda Slater

## Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra

More Friends  
WSM 2 49419

What fresh hell is this? Pretentious, bloated and just plain lame, Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra should have been something really special. After all, he had tremendous guest artists: Bono! Tom Jones! Jeff Beck! Norah Jones! Bryan Ferry! Even Chrissie Hynde! And more!

But no, it was not to be. Holland, an ageing New Waver best known for his keyboard work with Squeeze, has produced a turgid R & B exercise that once again shows it just doesn't mean a thing if you don't got that swing.

Holland formed his R & B Orchestra in 1985, and what a bunch of plodding wankers they are. How else to explain the tremendous dragging feeling that runs through every song? In fairness, the horn section isn't all that bad, if not all that great either. But the rhythm section just clumps along like they're on the tail end of a thousand-mile march.

It's too bad, because some classic opportunities have been lost here. Edwin Starr, in probably one of his last performances, belts out a Holland original and almost gets the band worked up to the point where they're as good as, say, The



Bill Garrett & Sue Lothrop



## Commitments.

On the other hand, Bryan Ferry warbles to the point of self-parody, Dionne Warwick sounds past her prime, and Chrissie Hynde strains to sing to a painfully slow dirge. To be fair, the album's got some highlights. Tom Jones is indefatigable, Ray Davies belts out one his stories to a Cuban back beat, and Jeff Beck's wailing blues nearly saves the whole endeavour.

Generally, though, the highlights are not enough to pull this one out of its sappy morass. Listening to Bono sing *If You Wear That Velvet Dress* is enough to make you wince. It's probably one of the most regrettable moments of his career. As they say, with friends like this...

—By Charles Mandel

## Goodbye Pretty Girl

Ben Sures  
Independent  
BS07CD

Ben Sures started out in Winnipeg and moved to Alberta a few years ago and all along he's been following that tortuous Canadian singer-songwriter path of house concerts, clubs, and festivals trying to get noticed and well - basically paying his dues. Now he has a new album.

Well Ben, you've arrived with an album you should be extremely proud of - the dues are paid. *Good-bye Pretty Girl*, co-produced by the amazing and tasteful Mike Lent, is a musical and lyrical treat. This album delivers the goods. Ben's always been a good songwriter but in addition this album showcases his songs in musically rich and diverse settings.

From the wonderfully musically rolling yet poignantly moving story of his sister in *Any Precious Girl* to the atmospheric and emotional *Water*. There is not a note out of place in a collection of clever and surprising songs.

The odd and striking *Holes* begins with a lyrical shot to the head, of powerful images juxtaposed with the mundane. There is a hole in the bucket/A hole in the ozone/A big hole in Kennedy's head/Hole in the doughnut/Hole in the forest/Holes in the tummies of the kids not fed.

Should you buy Ben Sures new Album? *Bien Sûr*, of course you should. It's a good 'un.

—By Les Siemieniuk

## June Tabor

An Echo of Hooves  
Topic Records  
TSCD543

*An Echo of Hooves* is a collection that throws down the gauntlet. Its challenge lies in the content. All but one song is a numbered Child ballad. The token exception *The Border Widow's Lament*, as near as damn it, is a Child ballad in all but name and number. The accompaniments in the most part are down to Huw Warren's piano, cello and piano accordion, Mark Emerson's viola, violin and piano and Tim Harries' string bass. Martin Simpson and Kathryn Tickell each guest on two (separate) tracks apiece on guitar and Northumbrian pipes re-



spectively, Tabor's voice is the main instrument, however. All the instrumentation is subservient to her voice, meaning everything else is there to ensure that the message of the song lyrics gets through.

*An Echo of Hooves* is an act of daring in a television age. Like some feral gardener, Tabor is here to plant pictures in the head. She does not stint on words or verses. *Fair Margaret And Sweet William* gets nineteen verses and *Sir Patrick Spens* twenty-three from a swift count of the lyrics in the booklet. This is not background listening material. There is a depth to her interpretations that demands total concentration. There are no jaunty rhythms or danceable bars to lighten the emotional load, to relieve the murder and mayhem, to make light of these tales of revenge, retribution and betrayal. Occasionally, her delivery flirts with the histrionic - step forward the accused, one *Hughie Graeme* - but what emerges incrementally is a collection of Anglo-Scottish ballads, some from North American variants (all sources are listed), with a deep streak of Borders character to them, the Anglo-Scottish border, that is. The material suits her voice, but in my judgement she was never more prepared to deliver such material as this with such maturity. Not easy listening in the finest sense.

—By Ken Hunt

## Frifot

Sluring  
Northside  
NSD 6076

*Sluring* is the fifth album by veterans of the Swedish traditional music scene, Ale Möller, Per Gudmundson and Lena Willemark collectively known as Frifot. As on past albums, the group continues to explore a varied array of traditional Swedish musical forms running the gamut from

polskas, hallings and herding songs to medieval ballads.

Though they may be the drawing card, Willemark's vocals - alternately playful and solemn but always entrancing - never overpowers the album which achieves a nice balance of vocals and instrumentation. Gudmundson and Willemark have clearly mastered the sometimes dissonant Swedish fiddling style, and Möller's octave mandola provides the rhythmic underpinning to the material. Gudmundson steps out on the Swedish bagpipe on a couple of occasions, and Möller shines on several pieces featuring his talent on the willow flute and other wind instruments (including the bluesy sounding cow horn).

The enhanced CD provides access to a video, album lyrics, information about the group and not least a recipe for sluring, a Swedish dish. For those who venture to try it, let's hope sluring the dish is as tasty as the album that bears its name.

—By Linda Slater

## Harv

Tost  
Northside  
NSD6069

With uproarious irreverence abounding in the cover art, featuring many apparently drink-sodden photographs, we were torn between fascination and fear as the CD spun up. Surprise, a very well behaved set of repetitive tunes more suited to a dance hall than a listening room with well played fiddle and very inventive percussion, heavy on the tambourine. Recording quality is fine, performances are strong, but what this group could do with is some compositions tailored to a mere listener

—By Hugh McMillan

## Jim Moray

Sweet England

Here it is then: Jim Moray's debut full-length recording. And if you've had even a taste of his earlier EP, then *Sweet England* will hold few surprises. Much has been made of Moray's use of electronics, but truth be told he's not particularly progressive in that respect. Throughout, *Sweet England* is more Pet Shop Boys than Autech's 'hre, more Chemical Brothers than Fennesz. And a few short years from now this record will sound very dated. But that said, it's still a great romp through familiar traditional songs presented in an unfamiliar way. His take on *The Raggle, Taggle Gypsy* is slow, brooding and brassy, highlighting the song's moody underbelly. *Lord Bateman* floats on a glistering electronic groove and *The Week Before Easter*, with its multi-tracked vocal backdrop, is the great folk song that Paddy McAloon never wrote. *April Morning* is bright and breezy, as befits the song's subject, and *Longing for Lucy* shows that Moray can write as well as he can play. It might not all live up to the hype, but if you enjoyed

37  
PENGUIN  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

Recordings

Cara Dillon's solo debut, or even Michael McGoldrick's Fused, then this will be right up your alley. A guilty pleasure for hot summer nights!

— By Richard Thornley

## Lynn Harrison

learning curve  
lynoleum music  
2003

This is Lynn Harrison's sophomore recording. The Toronto based, Winnipeg raised, and Texas born songwriter is an anomaly on the world of singer songwriters. Refreshingly she doesn't seem to have any angst, no broken heart and is just getting on with normal everyday life.

The stuff that some treat as mundane and unimportant in the grand scheme of things, yet it is what most of us spend our lives doing — normal everyday things like dealing with the tooth fairy's absentmindedness or realizing we haven't kept in touch because we've "been busy".

And as someone who has often made the in the dead of winter Christmas trek to Winnipeg from comparatively balmy Calgary, because of family, *Yes, it's Cold in Winnipeg* strikes a wonderfully funny and real chord.

*In Spite of It All* is a lovely view of life that says: In spite of it all, all the ways we can lose/We can find a bed of roses deep inside the blues. Raising kids and sending them off to school for the first time — this is not the stuff of singer songwriters. Well maybe it should be more often.

Lynn's lovely and welcoming voice is once again aided with the production help of David Woodhead on *learning curve*. David plays bass, mandolin, guitars & keyboards and is joined by Al Cross (drums), Kim Ratcliffe and Ray Montford (electric guitars), Anne Lindsay (violin), David

Matheson (guest vocals) providing for a classy folksy pop sound for Lynn's charming, positive, uplifting and life-affirming songs.

— By Les Siemieniuk

## Dan Bern and The LJBC

Fleeting Days  
Messenger Records  
MSGR 12

I've only ever seen Dan Bern perform solo. He's one of a kind. Smart as a pistol with a view of the world that is both dead on and yet totally out there. I've been amazed at his insights, his brashness and his inventiveness in lyrics. Did he really say that? Wow — that's right on. But always it was with just a guitar and his own energy. Seeing Dan was more an adventure in words rather than music.

Imagine my surprise to putting on *Fleeting Days* and coming away astounded by his musicianship. This is a great rootsy alt.-countryish, alt.-poppish recording. Dan is backed by a tight band featuring Jake Coffin, Brian Schey, Eben Grace and Wil Masiak who produced the album. They play guitars, dobros, pianos, wurlitzers, melotrons, accordions, djembes, lap and pedal steels, and assorted cowbells, tambourines, and shakers. The resulting arrangements and sounds recall Elvis Costello and the Attractions and Bob Dylan at their best. All this rousing musical firepower in aid of Dan's wonderfully rich and poignant songs. Because the heart of Dan Bern is still his astoundingly fresh and densely packed lyrics. He still surprises and takes left turns. His trip to Graceland starts acknowledging those that went before then takes a twist in the road.

Mississippi Delta shining like a national guitar/Paul Simon wrote that song about Graceland while driving his car/Mark Cohn wrote that other one/It was a big hit/it made mark Cohn real/I'm walking in Memphis/do I really feel the way I feel/Well look at me Lord/I am at Graceland/on a

Saturday afternoon/I threw up last light at a rest stop/From eating cheese grits/at the Waffle House/I felt like hell then, I feel alright now"

*Fleeting Days* is wonderful, wonderful album. I demand to see him with a band next time he comes to Canada. There's a lot more to Dan Bern than just a man with a guitar.

— By Les Siemieniuk

## Trevor Mills

Karaoke Cowboy  
Top Quark Productions  
TQP 001

Originality seems to come so easily to some artists that you wonder why everyone doesn't have it. Trevor Mills, who literally grew up in the Toronto folk scene, is one of those who have it in spades. Maybe it's in the blood. His father is veteran producer Paul Mills, who's recorded such classic Canadian acts as Stan Rogers, Ron Hynes, Sharon Lois & Bram and Tanglefoot. Mills senior co-produces the record with his talented son. Mills junior is a gifted songwriter. Each track on this, only his second outing, is a beautifully crafted, intelligent, piece of music, which seems to avoid the usual clichés, sounding classically inevitable, while not sounding like anyone else except Trevor Mills. That's no mean feat for a young songwriter. Alternately moving, humorous, or just plain gorgeous, the songs with lyrics are great, economical storytelling, while the instrumentals are lovely slices of pure melody. Each track also brings in just the right amount of support from other instruments: fiddle, banjo, piano, clarinet, trumpet, djembe, slide guitar, and so on, to make it sound country, folksy, old-timey, or jazzy as required. If he continues like this, Trevor Mills songs are going to be widely recorded by many other artists besides himself.

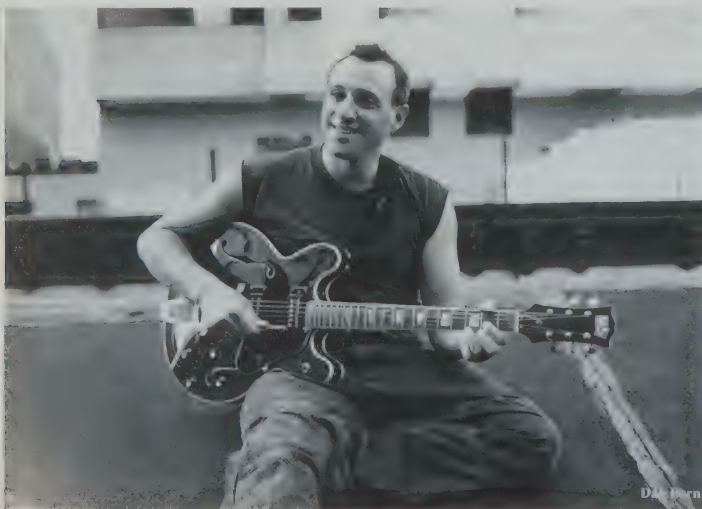
— By Barry Hammond

## Claire Holley

Dandelion  
Yep Roc Records  
YEP 2051

The same label that Caitlin Cary records for brings us their second release of Jackson, Mississippi, native Claire Holley. The singer-songwriter's new disc is a bright, sweet, luminous, warm-sounding disc full of small town sunlight and autumn leaves. Holley started her musical career by taking a ukulele with her to church and that kind of gospel-tinged intimacy comes through in her country-accented material. On this outing, she wanted to move away slightly from her individual sound to a more band-integrated one highlighted by a rhythm section. It seems to have worked out well. The band sounds tight and has a vintage instrument, tube-amplifier sound that suits her material. It's another advance from her self-titled debut disc and from her earlier discs, *Night Air* and *Sanctuary*.

— By Barry Hammond





## Mike Seeger

True Vine  
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings 2003  
SFW CD 40136

*True Vine* might perhaps be considered as Mike Seeger's excellent lifetime retrospective recording, a rational and thorough summery of what Seeger has accomplished as a performing artist and as a vigorous pro-active advocate of preserving traditional American culture. Self produced and recorded by Seeger, *True Vine* is a splendid gathering of Anglo-American and African-American influenced tunes, waltzes and songs that encompasses an astounding spectrum of music but with 23 great cuts the recording barely scratches the surface of Seeger's immense knowledge. Perhaps the CD might have been more appropriately titled *True Vine: Volume One*. I hope so because *True Vine* has all the passion & pathos that Mike Seeger brings to traditional music as a superb teller of tales and player of tunes. I simply want to hear more.

The youthful traditional folk singer of the 1960's with the cider hard voice has evolved into an artist in his sixties who now resonates with a mature richness that only highlights his comfort, attachment and passionate respect for old time music. Mike Seeger's instrumental prowess is very clearly demonstrated on the CD with masterful performances on harmonica, panpipes, autoharp, jaws harp, fiddle, guitar, dulcimer and a wide assortment of fretted and unfretted banjos. His choice of songs from the sorrowful commentary of *Don't Let Your Deal Go Down* to Libba Cotton's classic *Freight Train* to Uncle Dave Macon's version of the classic fiddle tune *Sail Away Ladies*, which Seeger does on Autoharp and panpipe, are consistently excellent throughout the album. This CD is pretty much essential for lovers of old time music.

— By Mitch Podolak

## Steeleye Span

The Lark In The Morning  
Castle Music  
CMDDD781

If you're into Steeleye and haven't got their first three albums BUY THIS NOW! *Hark The Village Wait*, *Please To See The King* and *Ten Man Mop* are all condensed onto two discs plus the bonus of *General Taylor* and *Rave On*. I can't stress enough how important these recordings were and still are. So, if you either remember the first time you heard them or are just getting into folk-rock, this is an essential purchase.

— By Pete Fyfe

## The Rick Fines Trio

Riley Wants His Life Back  
Independent  
RAF 004

There's a noticeable trend today for roots musicians to take their inspiration from the sound of the very recorded beginnings of their form, back to the 1920's and even before. Artists like The Asylum



Street Spankers, Gillian Welch, Keb' Mo', Michael Jerome Brown and Toni Price seem to feel the art is getting more watered down all the time and, at the beginning of this century, we need to go back to the best sources we have. Like the artist's listed above, The Rick Fines Trio is mining this tradition to great effect. This album is lush with the influences of early Jazz and Jump Blues from Django Rhinehart, to Meade Lux Lewis, Cab Calloway, Louis Jourdan, and Charles Brown. The trio consisting of Rick Fines on guitar, Rob Phillips on piano and Richard Simpkins on stand-up bass has thoroughly absorbed these styles and it seems as natural to them as breathing. Fines sings in an intimate, relaxed voice that's as steeped in jazz/blues as Dr. John or Mose Allison and just as effective. There's even a little Zydeco thrown in. The trio also has great instrumental back-up from track to track, especially drummer Al Webster and the fine trumpet and cornet work by Chris Whiteley. Fines (with some help from the others) is also a fabulous songwriter and nearly every track is memorable. A must-have gem of a recording for those who dig their sound retro.

— By Barry Hammond

## Bill Jones

Two Year Winter  
Compass Records  
743662

You can add another name to the roster of northern lasses giving new breath – and dollops of flair – to the sometimes wheezy English traditional folk scene. On the evidence of her second album Bill (Belinda) Jones, from Åsunderland, is a worthy peer of Kathryn Tickell, Eliza Carthy, and Kate Rusby. She has a lovely voice – strong and true but with a smoky, wistful edge – and she's a fine musician, on accordion, piano, and whistles. Jones also has a rare knack for picking material, and arranging and presenting it imaginatively.

That said, it's a mystery why *Two Year Winter* is issued as a double CD – or rather as one album with a 'Bits and pieces EP' disc added. It's not as if there wasn't room to include the four extra tracks on the primary disk, nor are they stylistically separate from the rest. There are no weak cuts – save perhaps the dreamy opener *From My Window*. Accompanied by six excellent musicians, Jones performs an even mix of traditional material, such as *The Holland Mistress* and *The Lover's Ghost*, and contemporary-in-a-trad-vein material. The title track is a poem by Anne Hills ably set to music by Jones. She's a good lyricist too. *The Story of Our Darling Grace* – a ballad about Victorian heroine Grace Darling – focuses intelligently on the way the media of the day manipulated the events, and unfolds at a fast clip.

My favourite cut is the last one on the EP, a slowed-down and achingly soulful interpretation of *Farewell to Nova Scotia*, which drawing out the essence of a tune much abused by the tiresome 'roaring lads' approach to Maritime music. Bill Jones has class, and confidence; and being a beautiful young woman won't hurt her chances of getting noticed by the UK's image-savvy media. She deserves the attention.

— By Tony Montague

## Various Artists

The Rough Guide  
To The Music of The Indian Ocean  
World Music Network  
RGNET 1086 CD

One of the best things about the Rough Guide series is the diversity they showcase in the cultural region of choice. This time it's the Indian Ocean, more specifically the islands off the South-eastern coast of Africa. Madagascar is one of the featured islands, so salegy is well represented, as is highlife. This you might expect, considering the geography. What you might not expect is Francois Guimbert,

39  
PENGUIN  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

Recordings



## cut a man's heart out Arlene Bishop

"mixes the arty spunk of Jane Siberry with Macy Gray"  
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## into the red tim readman

festival

"Into the Red is a great step forward in the musical career of Tim Readman." **Penguin Eggs**

"An enigmatic singer with a convincing story to tell, Readman is a singer with a bright future." **Dirty Linen**

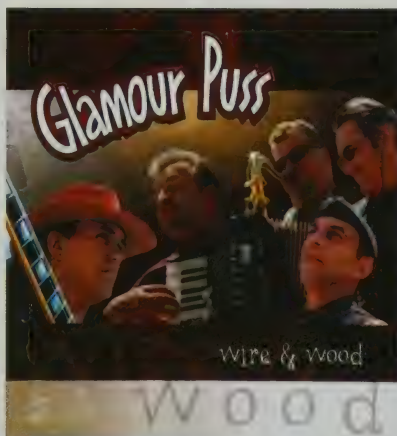
"Mesmerizing and innovative, Readman added new depths of passion, feeling and sensitivity to his work, all of which is beautifully captured here." **The Rogue Folk Review**

[www.timreadman.com](http://www.timreadman.com)

*Festival*

## Catch Canada's Hottest Band—Glamour Puss! "Wire & Wood" CD Launch Tour

- Sept. 6 Moncton, NB Empress Room
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- Sept. 12 Fredericton, NB Harvest Jazz & Blues
- Sept. 17 Halifax, NS Tribeca
- Sept. 18 Halifax, NS Sea Horse
- Sept. 19 Halifax, NS Bearley's
- Sept. 20 Charlottetown, PEI Mackenzie Theatre
- Sept. 24 Toronto, ON Hugh's Room
- Sept. 25 St. John's, NF Majestic Theatre
- Sept. 26 St. John's, NF The Fat Cat
- Sept. 27 St. John's, NF The Fat Cat
- Oct. 3 Ottawa, ON The Rainbow
- Oct. 4 Dunnville, ON Readers
- Oct. 7 Pointe-Claire, QC Bourbon Street
- Oct. 8 Montreal, QC Café Campus
- Oct. 10 Richmond, QC Centre Culturelle
- Oct. 11 Magog, QC Festblues
- Oct. 13-26 US Tour
- Oct. 29-Nov 1 Winnipeg, MB Windsor Hotel
- Nov. 3-5 Roundhill, AB Round Hill Hotel
- Nov. 6 Wetaskiwin, AB Slicks
- Nov. 7 Calgary, AB Kaos
- Nov. 8 Edmonton, AB The Sidetrack
- Nov. 13 Vancouver, BC The Yale
- Nov. 14 Duncan, BC Cowichan Folk Guild
- Nov. 15 Harrison, BC Harrison Memorial Hall
- Nov. 21-22 Chicoutimi, QC Hotel Chicoutimi
- Nov. 26 Val-d'Or, QC Salle Felix-Leclerc



"...Wire & Wood is without question, Glamour Puss's finest offering to date."

Doug Gallant, *The Guardian*

"Moncton's blues ambassadors are back with their fourth album, and it's a cooker. On *Wire & Wood*, Glamour Puss meld their various influences - blues, Acadie folk, zydeco - into a stew of New Orleans-flavoured stomp."

Dave Gauvin, *Moncton Times*

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Luther Wright & The Wrongs

whose smoky vocals bring to mind Cesaria Evora, from a certain other island on the other side of Africa. As well, there's fiddling that would be at home at any East Coast kitchen party, and the Calypso-flavoured rap of Tam-Tam Des Cools, and much more in between. The featured islands have variously been colonized by the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and French, as well as having been a stop on everyone else's trade route, and the cultural polyglot shows. But in a good way. One of the best surprises on the disc is the aptly named Cultural Musical Group, who sound positively Middle Eastern. Wonderful stuff. This is one of the best in the Rough Guide series.

— By Shawna Biamonte

## Bill Frisell

The Intercontinentals  
Nonesuch  
(79661-2)

Bill Frisell has had a long and varied career, but I must admit to having had only passing interest in much of his work since he moved away from guitar skronk with *Is That You?* Even at his most tributary, Frisell's playing is immediately identifiable and in later years I've found his sound coldly cerebral and discomforting. The *Intercontinentals* turns all of that on its ear. The signature guitar work is still there, although sounding warmer and looser than it has in years, and nobody would argue that this is not a Bill Frisell record. But what makes it so special is the way the players come together, leaving one with the impression of a group that has been playing together for years. Most prominent are Vinicius Cantuaria (guitar, percussion, and vocals), Sidiki Camara (calabash, shaker, djembe, cymbals, and vocals), and Christos Govetas (oud). The other two players, Greg Leisz (pedal and lap steel) and Jenny Scheinman (violin and vocal), regular Frisell collaborators, are only less prominent because their instruments overlap the range occupied by Frisell's guitar, the three players sometimes merging into one. The whole album really is a wonder, but some of the highlights include Cantuaria's *Perritos* (one of the two songs that he sings, the other being Gilberto Gil's *Procissão*), the groove machine that is *Baba Drame*, and the

guitar-oud duet of *The Young Monk*. Throughout there are influences from all of the players and their homelands—Mali, Greece, Brazil—topped off by Frisell's amalgam of jazz and American folk. Truly intercontinental.

— By Richard Thornley

## Eddi Reader

Eddi Reader Sings The Songs Of Robert Burns  
Rough Trade Records  
CD097

Folk-Art has certainly found a fine sponsor in the form of Eddi Reader. Listening to the full scope of this recording a whole new avenue has been explored within the constraints of folk for folk's sake. By the second track *My Love Is Like A Red Red Rose* the extent to which the orchestra play a significant role becomes more obvious. The gently picked guitars layered on a bed of string accompaniment leaves the listener in no doubt that here is how Burn's songs should have been adapted years before. A lot of the melancholy texture is down to the arrangements by Kevin McCrae who appears to have captured the emotion of the lyric in an exquisite, limpid pool of violins, violas and cello. In addition, by choosing to surround herself with the musical integrity of musicians such as John McCusker, Phil Cunningham, Ian Carr and Ewen Vernal she has in effect brought together a highly regarded folk mafia. With the depth of material at her command, Eddi has every intention of bringing her audience along with her on an exploration of Burn's evocative lyrics. A splash of colour is introduced with the jaunty *Willie Stewart*, which segues nicely into the knees-up of *Molly Rankin* where the interaction between McCusker's fiddle and Cunningham's accordion takes us into ceilidh country. All in all I'd say this album

reaches the number one spot in my folk chart so far this year and personally I can't see it being bettered. Now, if you'll excuse me I'll get back to luxuriating in the tones of *Ae Fond Kiss*.

— By Pete Fyfe

## Luther Wright & The Wrongs

Guitar Pickin' Martyrs  
Back Porch  
84106

Whether or not you liked *Rebuild the Wall*, Luther Wright and the Wrongs' bluegrass tribute to Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, what it certainly did was bring them to a lot of people's attention. They've chosen to follow it up with *Guitar Pickin' Martyrs*, featuring all original material save for a lovely version of Bill Munroe's *Nearly Dark*. This album is a bit more "straight" country than the previous three, sometimes crossing right into honky-tonk. What is not straight is Luther's lyrics, however; his irreverent wry wit is in good form here. It's a bit of a shame really. He writes such gosh-darned pretty songs when he's not being silly. But I know it's part of his charm. He even takes another shot at Pink Floyd; you can almost see his knowing wink as he caps off *Hero*, the last song on the album, with a truly Waters-esque guitar solo. Other fine tracks include *Land of Milk and Honey*, a duet with ex-Weeping Tile band mate Sarah Harmer, the aforementioned Bill Munroe tune, the toe-tapping title track, and the cow-punk of *Broken Fucking Heart*. Oh Susanna even puts in a guest appearance as a backing vocalist on a few tracks. All in all a pretty solid album, but I know they can do even better; they just seem to be having too much fun to try very hard.

— By Shawna Biamonte

## Richard Shindell

Courier  
Signature Sounds  
SIG 1270

A gorgeous, crystalline recording leave few clues that this is a live record. With the exception of the polite applause punctuating the end of tracks and the low-key between-song stage murmurs from Shindell, the initial impression

## David Gillis

when you're got a dream

"David Gillis sings with an original voice, grounded in the best North American songwriting traditions. He's also a killer guitar player..."

**Don Ross** — *Narada Recording Artist*

www.davidgillis.com

is of a more studio-oriented project than a live, spontaneous environment.

That's a good thing, as the disc has a hypnotic effect, drawing the listener deeper into the songs. Richard Shindell is a highly regarded US East Coast singer-songwriter. His songs are richly detailed snapshots of ordinary moments in everyday peoples lives. You may know him from the trio *Cry Cry Cry* (the 90's new folk trio w/ Dar Williams and Lucy Kaplansky), but he has released four solo albums. *Courier* gives us a nice overview of his career, from the first song he wrote (*On A Sea of Fleur de Lis*) to his strongest (*Arrowhead, Fishing*). He throws in a couple of terrific covers (*Willin'* and an early Springsteen tune *Fourth of July, Asbury Park*) which gives the disc a comfortable feel, from those intense tear jerkers to lighter, trucking tunes. His literate songs are meticulously crafted, and the set grows with intensity. The live versions highlight the rich, detailed images, the production here mixes his vocals upfront, and the band creates a comfortable folk-roots-rock feel. *Courier* serves as a terrific introduction to great American songwriter.

— By Tom Metzals

## Africando All Stars

Mandali  
Stern's Africa  
STCD1092

*Africando's Martina* is the most recent in the on-going project combining New York-based salsa musicians and African vocalists. But perhaps the finest of all the albums in the project was the 2000 release, *Mandali*.

Elegant arrangements support some of Africa's best vocalists: Congo's Koffi Olomide and Lokua Kanza, Guinea's Sekouba Bambino, and most notably, a contribution by Salif Keita of his early hit, *Nioman*. The melodies are lovely and very catchy.

The popularity of Cuban music in Africa makes

this project seem almost obvious in its connections. Certainly there is an ease with which the African vocalists float above the Latin rhythms, and a special rhythmic spice when the salsa lyrics are sung in Wolof or Yoruba.

The band's arrangements are clean and crisp, and the musicianship, which includes piano, bass, timbales, congas, full horn sections, and on occasion, strings, is impeccable.

If you have any interest in Latin dance music whatsoever, this album is a most desirable addition to your collection.

— By Lark Clark

## Big Dave McLean

Blues from the Middle  
Stony Plain  
SPCD 1290

McLean's played the blues for more years than Robert Johnson lived. A long-established Winnipeg fixture on the Prairie blues scene, his dedication and respect for blues traditions show on this diverse collection.

Through 14 songs, he runs the gamut of blues — acoustic to Chicago styles — narrated by his gravelly, road worn voice. Most of the songs are originals, and for a Canadian white boy playing the blues, he makes a convincing effort.

The album is also an entirely Winnipeg product. Recorded and engineered with a backing band of almost exclusively local musicians, *The Middle* was also produced by Winnipeg Folk Festival artistic director Rick Fenton.

Good sound quality, good musicianship, good feel.

— By Stuart Adams

## Robert Palmer

Drive  
Compendia music  
0-15095-4886-2

For the vast majority, Robert Palmer is best remembered for his '80's video *Addicted to Love* — more so for the black-clad, sexy backing band than for the music. Back then he was the sharp dressed cool crooner. Those days are evidently gone.

*Drive*, is Palmer at his best. Downright dirty, gritty, no frills R&B. The album consists mainly of covers of old blues standards. Among the tracks worth a mention is *Aint That Just Like A Woman* and a great reworking of Willie Dixon's *29 Ways*, topped off by a pounding version of *Hound Dog*. Solid backing is provided by DR Gabs on piano, Franco Limido on harmonica and Carl Carlton on guitar. There is a passion and sincerity about this album that gives these old standards a new lease of life. When it comes to the blues, Palmer can belt it out with the best of them. This album is proof enough of that.

— By John Minter

## Various Artists

The Rough Guide to American Roots  
World Music Guide  
RNET 1113 CD

American roots music cuts a wide swath and this new Rough Guide takes in quite a few of the genres that fall under its rubric. Half of the twenty artists featured are important trend-setters (including Bill Monroe, David Grisman, Woody Guthrie, Muddy Waters, The Soul Stirrers) while the rest (including Claire Lynch, Big Mama Thornton, Kermit Ruffins, Rosie Ledet, Joanne Shenandoah) are notable artists in their own right. The music on *American Roots* is of high quality but the album's weakness is its narrow scope. Instead of making room for several entries each for blues and gospel (not to mention five bluegrass tracks, three of them in sequence) why not accommodate rockabilly, swamp pop, Midwestern polka, regional fiddle styles, and other genres that were left out?

— By Paul E. Comeau

## David K

Take A Mile  
Blue House Songs  
BHS 321

David K has been a key musician and producer with Eileen McGann, Trilogy, The Mrs. Ackroyd Band among others, and now he's a solo recording artist. The cover states that he loves the blues and early country music that grew out of the blues. *Take a Mile* is a collection of some of those old songs by the likes of Bill Monroe and Junior Parker and eight original songs David has written in the style of those good old boys.

And he clearly has absorbed the lessons of the blues and he writes some pretty good songs in that style. David can also play guitar, as well as dobro, national steel, mandolin, and bass. His partner Eileen McGann joins in some nice back-up vocals.

Unfortunately, David has been blessed with a very pleasant singing voice and, well, the blues he sings just don't come off blue enough. He doesn't sound like he's really suffered. The blues shouldn't sound so amiable. But the songs are good enough that maybe David should take up smoking and scratch up that voice box a bit.

— By Les Siemieniuk

(A review of this disc appeared in the last issue.



Big Dave McLean



But atrocious editing subverted the writer's views.  
So here it is again the way it was intended – The  
Ed.)

## Various Artists

Johnny's Blues: A Tribute To Johnny Cash  
Northernblues Music  
NBM0017

The ever-innovative Northernblues Music, a small but progressive Canadian blues label, has come up with another intriguing project in this collection of blues artists covering Johnny Cash tunes. Helmed by veteran producer and guitar honcho Colin Linden, it's a widely-varied mix of artists, containing both elder statesmen and younger acts, Canadians and Americans. You get legend Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown doing a duet on *Get Rhythm* with young Baton Rouge up-and-comer Benji Davis. Harry Manx, who's been receiving a lot of much-deserved press lately, nails down a nice version of *Long Black Veil*, backed by a black gospel-sounding trio. Mavis Staples, madam gospel herself, mines the funkier depths of *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* to great effect. There's tracks by Paul Reddick & The Sidemen, Maria Muldaur, Chris Thomas King, and Alvin Youngblood Hart. Linden, himself, adds a foot-stomping *Big River* and (as one third of Blackie & The Rodeo Kings) rocks out on *Folsom Prison Blues*. What keeps it interesting, however, is some of the odder directions: Kevin Breit, playing National Steel (and several other instruments besides) slides an instrumental version of *Send a Picture of Mother* in a distinctly mariachi-flavored direction, while Corey Harris grounds *Redemption* in a Rastafari beat. Despite being from Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, Garland Jeffries spices up a laid-back version of *I Walk The Line* with Cajun-flavored accordion. There's even humor in Sleepy LaBeef's *Frankie's Man Johnny*. While no single cut is electrifying, it's a strong collection with something for every taste in the blues.

– By Barry Hammond

## Bob Fox

Borrowed Moments  
Topic Records  
TSCD544

Bob Fox opens this album with a song about transportation called *Virginia*, reminding that, contrary to the received opinion contained in most folksongs from the British folk tradition, transportation was more than a creaking prison ship voyage to Van Dieman's Land. In the booklet notes, Fox acknowledges Martin Carthy (who recorded a version of it as *Virginny* on his *Crown of Horn* (1976)). Fox's version is set to a light dance rhythm, a mazurka composed by Norman Holmes called *The White House* "to represent this convict's dreams of happier times at home". It's not a flash move, it's one that has been thought through thoroughly and it is a tasteful use of the tradition and example of applied brain-power. *Borrowed Moments* has plentiful examples of



Fox's resourcefulness. Even when he tackles *Dance To Your Daddy* – one of North-East England's most famous songs – he handles it with a serious intent usually lost on most people who trot it out with all the superficiality of filler material in a children's television show. Fox's best performances, as in interpretations, for me are of Ralph McTell's tale of ethnic cleansing/genocide Yugoslav-style *Peppers And Tomatoes*, Ewan MacColl's *Shoals of Herring* (one of the greatest folksongs of all time) and Steve Tilston's *Life Is Not Kind To The Drinking Man* (a title to 'wet the appetite', if ever). Fox plays fine acoustic guitar on most tracks. Otherwise, the instrumentation consists of permutations of double bass (Neil Harland), piano accordion (annA rydeR (sic)), viola (Chuck Fleming) and flute or whistle (Norman Holmes). Not an instant earworm, more subtle than that: a real grower.

– By Ken Hunt

## Doc Watson

Trouble In Mind: The Doc Watson  
Country Blues Collection 1964-1998  
Sugar Hill  
SUG-CD-3966

Culled from 10 albums on the Vanguard and Sugar Hill labels, this re-packaging of country-style blues material from Doc's repertoire is limited by the theme of the album and the sources from which they are taken. Some of Doc's signature tunes are missing: *Windy And Warm*, *Southbound*, *Black Mountain Rag*, *Beaumont Rag* and *East Tennessee Blues*. It's splitting hairs to

says some of these are not country blues, for Watson has always been heavily influenced by the blues. Still, this is a fine sampler of 17 tracks including *White House Blues*, *Stackole*, his classic *Deep River Blues*, *Little Sadie*, *Gambler's Yodel* and *Lost John*.

– By Bob Remington

## Eric Andersen

Beat Avenue  
Appleased Recordings  
APRCD 1068

Eric Andersen's songs, voice, and guitar have created a career, spanning over 30 years, including at least 21 albums. His last was ironically and aptly entitled *You Can't Relive The Past* – you can't. But every good career is excused a faltering step. This time round Eric proves if you can't relive the past you certainly can and should revisit it every once in awhile.

*Beat Avenue* is double CD. The first comprising 12 new hard-hitting, guitar-driven typical – ironic and ghostly – Eric Andersen songs. Eric is backed by a crack band including guitarist Eric Bazilian from The Hooters; drummer Shawn Pelton from The Saturday Night Live Band; bassist Mark Egan of the Pat Methany Group; Garth Hudson of The

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Caitlin Cary

Band; violinist Joyce Andersen, and multi-instrumentalist, Robert Aaron, who has been a member of the Wyclef Jean Band for the past 6 years. Back-up singers include Phoebe Snow and Lucy Kaplansky, as well as Eric's daughter, singer-songwriter Sari Andersen. This in itself would be enough to recommend the album but there's more.

The second disc features just two works. One is a 10 minute soft blues shuffle entitled *Blue Rockin' Chair*. It's a wonderful soft song that you can get lost in. Then there's the long cinematic narrative, *Beat Avenue*. This recitation, set to 50's beatnik style jazz work, takes you a long a 26-minute journey through a 24-hour period that takes place in San Francisco on the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated. A day where besides the world news, a young Eric attends a poetry reading and a party with poets Allan Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti,

Sometimes very moving, at times overwrought and artsy, it's a really interesting piece of work. Apparently Eric first started out writing it as a companion piece to his 1989, song *Ghosts Upon the Road* from the great album of the same name. It's to be listened to when you have the time to let it swirl lazily about you preferably in a darkened room, some good headphones, and a bottle o' red wine. Like it or not, it's a pleasure to hear someone taking a step off the safe predictable path.

— By Les Siemieniuk

## Marv Machura

Diamonds For Fields Of Clover  
Red Poppy Productions  
DFC002

Although he's a veteran of both solo and band performing, this disc marks the first professional studio recording of Edmonton-born singer-songwriter Marv Machura. Two previous efforts were self-produced. Producer Gary Koliger (Ian Tyson and others), who plays guitars, bass and percussion on the disc, lends Machura solid support in

showcasing his talents as well as providing (with Steve Hoy on drums and Teddy Borowiecki on keyboards and accordion) a convincing band sound. Machura patterns himself after the three people the disc is dedicated to: Ian Tyson, Gordon Lightfoot and John Denver. The latter's outdoorsy, family-man, wholesomeness is mirrored in the cover photos. While Machura has his moments, the songs are a bit self-consciously earnest, relentlessly Canadian-referential, and sometimes awkward. *In Kursk*, he tries to cram in lines like: "bigger than a football field is long, she had twenty-eight torpedoes and missiles, too," or "That can only take a man so far in this age of technological change." Such lyrics don't exactly roll easily off the tongue and miss the emotional drama of the men dying while their navy worries about the politics of asking another country for help. Compare it to the economy of Gordon Lightfoot's "Does anyone know where the love of God goes when the waves turn the minutes to hours," (*The Wreck of The Edmund Fitzgerald*) and you know why people are still singing Lightfoot's song and probably won't be singing Machura's. Despite the odd clunky line, Machura is a winning singer and talented guitar player. Best bets are the title cut, *Saskatchewan*, and *Hockey Town*.

— By Barry Hammond

## Caitlin Cary

*I'm Staying Out*  
Yep Roc Records  
YEP 2049

Last year was a good year for Caitlin Cary. Her first solo album *While You Weren't Looking* proved Ryan Adams wasn't the only talented solo act to come out the late critically acclaimed alt country band Whiskeytown. Then her first solo world tour included opening for Lyle Lovett.

So what does Caitlin do for an encore. Well, it's called *I'm Staying Out* Whether she's languidly, *Sleepin' In on Sunday* or telling us about the *Cello Girl*

with a rock sold beat, Cary's beautiful melancholic vocals are at the center of this serving of a BBQ sauced mix of pop, folk, rock, country, and soul. It's delicious.

*I'm Staying Out* builds on her debut and pleasingly it's some steps different from the debut, which was filled with songs about lost or misguided people. This one is populated with women who are strong and stare squarely life in the face. There are echoes of Mary Chapin Carpenter (who supplies back-ups on three songs) here in these wonderful bittersweet songs like *Beauty Fades Away* and old Nashville country ladies like Patsy Cline in *Please break my Heart*.

All in all, Caitlin Cary has come up with a lovely album. Proving that, after Whiskeytown, a band, where she was not the focus, she confidently and musically can stand in front of a band. She's for real and here to stay.

— By Les Siemieniuk

## Various Artists

The Sounds of Atlantic Canada  
Stephen MacDonald Productions  
SMPDC 1015

From the sublime to the not-so-sublime, *The Sounds of Atlantic Canada* is a crash course in the musical history of the east coast. In the former category we find some classics like Stan Rogers' *Barrett's Privateers* and Ron Hynes' *Sonny's Dream*, and some lesser-known (but just as excellent) pieces from Teresa Doyle, Barachois, and Anita Best. In the not-so-sublime category we get Denny Doherty doing *Song for the Mira*, the bombast that is the Barra MacNeils, and Rita MacNeil with the Men of the Deeps on *Farewell to Nova Scotia*. If your Canadiana collection is weak on east coast artists then this will fill some gaps for you. Otherwise, it's one for the tourists.

— By Richard Thornley

## Various Artists

Cape Breton By Request: Volume II  
Atlantic Artists  
SMPDC 1016

The second CD in this series lacks the many of the big names who were featured on the first such as The Barra MacNeils, Buddy MacMaster, and Heather and Cookie Rankin. This time the artists are Miller's Jug, Matt Minglewood, Fred Lavery, John Allan Cameron, J.P. Cormier, McGinty, Sam Moon, Brakin' Tradition, Buddy and the Boys, Rita MacNeil, Maxine MacLeod, Howie MacDonald, Ronald Bourgeois, Doris Mason. Some of the material is traditional or traditional sounding such as John Allan Cameron's reading of *Mingulay Boat Song* and Miller's Jug's *Ghost of Bras d'Or*. There's some singer songwriter fare like Fred Lavery's *Song For Noel* and Sam Moon's *Midday Matinee* both of which have a country-rock feel. J.P. Cormier weighs in with his own composition *Another Morning* which is I fear not one of his best. Rita MacNeil delivers a parody of *Plain Ole Country Boy* entitled *Plain Ole Miner*



Boy which did nothing for me.

Overall I was disappointed with this disc for two reasons. First, I didn't like a lot of the material as it seemed clichéd. Second, it doesn't seem to hang together as a concept. The performers are all from Cape Breton but that does not come through musically to give the album a clear identity.

— By Tim Readman

## The Jayhawks

Rainy Day Music  
American/Lost Highway  
B0000080-02

This disc will be seen as a benchmark in the career of this band. Some will see it as a return to an earlier sound, while some will see it as the high peak of their achievement. The sound is classic in every way — strumming acoustic guitars mixed with electric ones, drums, bass, some keyboards, austere, highly melodic, folk pop songs with cast iron structures anchoring soaring vocal harmonies, as accessible as The Beatles. It's not edgy. There's nothing in the lyrics that can't be understood by a twelve-year old kid. But DAMN does that formula have power when it's done well and these guys do it REALLY WELL! Produced by Ethan Johns (who also plays), with Rick Rubin as Executive Producer, it's the Minnesota alt-country band's seventh outing. Most of the songs are written by vocalist/guitarist Gary Louris, with two notable exceptions (*Tampa To Tulsa* and *Don't Let The World Get In Your Way*) by drummer Tim O'Reagan. Bass is by Marc Perlman and there's a

new guitarist, Stephen McCarthy. Jacob Dylan and Matthew Sweet guest with a few others. There's a bonus disc with alternate versions of two songs on the main disc, plus four others, including a great self-deprecating, whole band-penned, touring song called *Fools On Parade*. If you want to try these guys, try this one. Classic songs and classic pop. Righteous!

— By Barry Hammond

## Rhonda Vincent

One Step Ahead  
Rounder  
1166104972

She of the tight leather pants, spaghetti-strap dresses and cover-girl makeup is back with another slick CD that somehow left me a bit cold. Everything Rhonda Vincent does is polished, exceedingly competent and faithful to the traditional aspects of bluegrass, yet there seems to be a formula to it all — just the right ratio of slow songs to fast, a couple of gospel numbers, instrumentals dropped into all the right places. Vincent comes across the same way live — a great show, but buffed up glossier than a new gem stone. This is, however, a fine CD, highlighted in my books by the instrumental *Frankie Belle*, which Vincent has been playing live for some time. She admits the CD was a challenge due to her touring demands and living up to the expectations of her well-received previous two CDs. Nuff said.

— By Bob Remington

## Natarajxt

Ocean Birds  
Nutone  
0 6700 30305 2 6

Whenever a recording like Natarajxt's *Ocean Birds* crosses my desk, I wonder anew at the music classification system. Is this predominantly electronic hybrid of house beats and East Indian raga music really roots? Is this a suitable disc for Penguin Eggs readers?

Well, underneath the trio's machine-generated thumps and artificial chirps some genuine roots and world music is discernible. Pierre Grimout plays a mean classical sitar, while Richard Bernet offers up duelling lines on his sarod and esraj, both East Indian stringed instruments.

The wild card in all this is Philippe Capitani. It is he who programs the drum machines, adds the sampling and computer, and layers the keyboards over top. The mix is not as soulless as it might sound. Rather, the band falls into some nice grooves, one of which

is bizarrely reminiscent of recent Capercaille, of all things. Capitani also lays down some nice tuned tabla work.

At points the whole East Indian influence vanishes briefly, as when the band dissolves into a funk jam during *Space In*. Natarajxt keeps a good beat — *Funny Tune* is great head-nodding music — but ultimately I wonder if the whole exercise isn't a bit frustrating. I'm not convinced it's the best dance music I've ever heard, and purist world beat fans will sniff at the album's heavy electronics. This finally leaves Natarajxt in the uncomfortable role as a sort of international muzak band, the kind of generic mix of synthetic sound and world beat that is all too common these days and finally is both undistinguished and unsatisfying.

— By Charles Mandel

## Misty In Roots

Roots Controller  
Real World  
7243 8 12620 2 3

Those snapping rim shots, that insistent keyboard banging, the winding bass lines — reggae music is recognizable in seconds, and Misty In Roots is one of its best proponents. Right from the first driving notes of *True Rasta* through to a live performance of *Ghetto of the City*, this is a classic collection.

It's been 12 years since this British band last recorded and they've lost none of their fire. Overly political, with much in common with dub artist Linton Kwesi Johnson, the 16-member collective offers songs like *Cover Up* that concerns the poor police investigation into the murder of black teenager Steve Lawrence by white racists in London in the early '90s.

In fact, the band has always courted controversy. Misty In Roots never shied away from tough issues. At one point, during a demonstration against the National Front, police raided the group's house, fracturing the skull of their manager in the process.

Such incidents inform Misty's aggressive hip-thrusting dub storm. A number of the songs on *Roots Controller* are re-released, a snapshot of the band still intact before the tragic swimming death of vocalist Delvin Tyson (brother of singer and



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Carrie Horachek

trumpet player Walford Tyson) in 1992. In the horn-drenched bounce of early *Misty in Roots* we hear some of the band's finest moments, particularly during the two live tracks included here. This recording is a must-have for reggae collectors.

— By Charles Mandel

### Various Artists

The Rough Guide to  
South African Gospel,  
World Music Network.  
RNET 1099 CD

In South Africa it's not difficult to amass a group of vibrant singers, with plenty of men. The church is still a refuge and a place of community for South Africans, 80 percent of whom consider themselves Christian. Nor is gospel music a marginal area for commercial musical undertakings. In fact it is the largest genre of music sales in SA.

Add to this that traditional South African music is largely vocal based, and you understand why "church music" (the local term) represents not only good business for record labels, but offers groups and soloists alike a huge nationwide audience.

Once again Rough Guides has assembled a diverse, informative and entertaining compilation, with good notation and photos, and reference discographies of music sources. The material presented ranges through the many styles of church music in South Africa, male ensembles like Ladysmith Black Mambazo, groups using electric guitars and rhythm sections in the township style (think Mahotella Queens), mass choirs, pop groups, and choirs and ensembles from small to colossal.

While most of the singers are uninhibited, spirit-filled amateurs, there are also divine professional voices, light and lithe, weaving in and out of rooty, rhythmic back-up arrangements. One of the tracks features a Sotho version of the national an-

them, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, that takes considerable liberties, which would be an outrage in our culture, but in South Africa, rockin' IS reverence. You get that from the first opening notes, to the last holy spirits. Amen! Amandla!

— By Lark Clark

### Carrie Horachek

Out The Car Window  
Independent  
CHCD2003

Out the car window is the first album by singer-songwriter Carrie Horachek. Although she's based in Saskatoon, the album was recorded in Edmonton, and features Ben Sures on electric guitar and production by Brock Skywalker. The sound veers between alt.-country and moody folk-rock. Truthfully, her sound works best when she's working the alt.-country vein. The breathy vocals, atmospheric guitars, and quiet drums mesh well that way. Good examples on this album include *Branded*, *Sticking Around*, and the title track. The rest of the album, unfortunately, sounds much like every other folk-rock group in this country. I guess the thing I like least about this album is the fact that she sounds like she's singing other people's songs. All these songs about heartbreak and absolutely no heartbreak in her voice. But she has time to work these things out. This is a first album after all. And the songwriting's solid. Once she decides what she wants to sound like and gets her band to coalesce around her, she could be a force to be reckoned with. Until then, let this one pass you by.

— By Shawna Biamonte

### Flatt and Scruggs

The Complete Mercury Recordings  
Mercury  
B0000070-02

Sandwiched between their early years with Bill Monroe, and an almost 20-year stint on Columbia, Lester and Earl laid down these 28 tracks for Mercury records between 1948 and 1950. Originally released in the early 90s, *The Complete* has extensive liner notes and is now chronologically arranged.

Fresh from a journeyman stint with Monroe (acknowledged as the 'Father of Bluegrass'), the two had formed their own band and launched a career that went on to eclipse their progenitor's reputation. A Columbia compilation is also available and provides an excellent selection of songs, but the Mercury assemblage is worth having for a number of reasons.

Despite having been recorded 50 years ago, the sound quality is more than acceptable. The song selection is almost entirely different from the Columbia set, and includes a number of classics, such as *Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms*, *Salty Dog Blues*, as well as an almost bluesy *Doin' My Time*.

The album also has an 'authentic' feel that seems to pre-date their later success when they rode the folk music revival wave that began in the late '50s, culminating with the 1962 hit, *The Ballad of Jed Clampett*. *Mercury* chronicles a period when they were bluegrass road warriors, putting on show after show, mile after mile — long before college campuses and television.

— By Stuart Adams

### Robb Johnson

Clockwork Music  
Irregular Records  
IRR048

Robb Johnson's offering for 2003 stalks geographical and political areas dear to me. The songs are mostly an inheritance, as Hilaire Belloc might have written, of Johnson's time spent in Thuringia in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) — with interludes in Leuven and London thrown in for good measure. The images that he pours out are particular yet universal. His songs are tales of party men, of the protests against what became the Second Gulf War, of historic persecution and the need for vigilance and speaking out, of lottery or Lotto fantasies, of envy. With Johnson's deepest songs, it is often what he sets up between interstices in the lines that delivers the goods. *Breakfast in Chemnitz*, a fantasy dialogue with a bust of Karl Marx, slips between the banal, everyday realities of life like the quality of coffee and the encroachment of Big Mac 'culture' and what was lost when the GDR regime was toppled. Earlier this year, Jürgen Ehle of the East German rock band (former for the former, reuniting for the second) Pankow was in the audience when Johnson sang the lines, "No, books aren't burned now/ it's just no-one reads them..." and the clarity of Johnson's observation ran across his face like a thunderbolt spreading a smile. Johnson, in the good company of Miranda Sykes (double bass) and Saskia Tomkins (cello, viola and violin) has a triumph on his hands with this one.

— By Ken Hunt



## John Hiatt & The Goners

Beneath This Gruff Exterior

New West  
NW6045

John Hiatt is, and always will be, a folk musician. *Beneath This Gruff Exterior* is a predominantly uptempo album of his tunes, but despite anything you might read, he doesn't rock out. Think of fast folk, before you think of Hiatt rocking on this album. In fact, even slow rock, has more of a kick to it.

That doesn't make this a bad album. Not by any stretch. Sonny Landreth takes a major hand on slide guitar, backed by the extremely able rhythm duo of David Ranson on bass, and Kenny Blevins on drums. The boys are solid on fast material, and with another singer, they could rock.

But Hiatt's sensibilities reside in folk, and even though he has that growly vibrato, he simply sings with too much awareness, when a rock singer would be singing with abandon. If you're a Hiatt fan, you could well find this album a fascinating journey through another part of this man's personality – and well worth the trip.

– By Stuart Adams

## Tony Cuffe

Sae will we yet

Greentrax  
CDTRAX243

*Sae Will We Yet* opens with *Tail Toddle*, some tongue-twisting, bawdy Scottish mouth music, taken from a demo featuring Tony Cuffe and band mates the Windbags in 2000. There is so much life and joy in the song, yet it is impossible to review this disc without acknowledging the circumstances under which it came to be. In December 2001, Tony Cuffe passed away from cancer at the age of



Tony Cuffe

47. Throughout 2001, he continued to record at home when his health would permit. After his death, musical friends and family in the U.S. and Scotland worked to complete the project with producer Jim Sutherland.

Cuffe was a rare interpreter of traditional Scottish songs, as well as an incredible guitarist and Celtic harpist. His virtuosity is evident throughout *Sae Will We Yet*, on pieces culled from earlier releases (such as the title track, from 1980's *Jock Tamson's Bairns*), live songs and tunes, and newer pieces from the last few months of his life (including a great destined-to-become-trad. Cuffe original, *The Bonny Lassie*). There is a poignancy in these later recordings, as Cuffe's clear voice falters at times, his breathing laboured. But it's still great music, and while *Sae Will We Yet* is not the masterpiece it might have been, it is a fitting tribute to a musician who still had much music left to share.

– By Sandy Stiff

## Various Artists

Unwired: Europe  
World Music Network  
RG1101 CD

Fortunately for us, Canada has a modern-day Alan Lomax to criss-cross the globe looking for traditional musicians. Okay, so, Eliza Carthy and Altan aren't exactly obscure sharecroppers who work the fields by day and play the porches by night.

But, Dan Rosenberg has gathered some 18 tracks that portray a healthy variety of acoustic world music from as many countries. Everyone included is presented as a bonafide best in their idiom.

Listen to flamenco player Pepe Habichuela, or Annbjørg Lien of Norway on harpinger fiddle – excellent instrumentalists who are capable of gathering audiences in any country. Note that most of the songs include vocals in the original languages (including Altan and Mairi MacInnes), which give a truly global flavour to this diverse collection of material from Eastern to Northern Europe.

– By Stuart Adams

## Wendy Stewart

Standing Wave  
Greentrax Recordings  
CDTRAX242

A beautiful and well crafted album from this former member of Coelbeg who is one of the top harpists in Scotland. Wendy sings and plays not only the gut-strung harp but the concertina, electro harp and Bohemian harp. Other musicians on this release are Gary West (whistle, bagpipes), Rod Paterson (vocals, guitar),

Fraser Spiers (harmonica) and Mike Travis (percussion). Vocals and accompaniment are excellent throughout. So sit back and relax with a wee dram and drink in the sounds of a real virtuoso playing the instrument of the angels. Recommended, especially for harpists of all persuasions.

– By Tim Readman

## Gjallarhorn

Grimborg  
Northside  
NSD6070

A delightful blending of traditional Scandinavian fiddling with the Digeridoo from down under in the stead of the time-honoured drone of the pipes, with brilliant vocal artistry. Recording quality is superb, with a broad, believable soundstage and full rich tones, clear and deep.

Compositions and performances captivate, enchant and propel the listener emotionally. The violin work is masterful, evoking a breadth of timbre reaching into the realm of wind instruments. In combination with voice and dig, wow.

– By Hugh McMillan

## Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart

Never Gonna Let You Go  
Gearle Records  
EVL2008-2  
Must Be Live  
Gearle Records  
EVL2008-1

*Never Gonna Let You Go*, the new studio album from husband and wife Mark Stuart and Stacey Earle (and the first to feature Mark in a co-headlining role), is a two parter. The first disc is the studio album they intended to make. It's full of bland folk-pop. Nothing bad, just not really special either. But the second one is different. It's called *In the Ruff*, and it features just the two of them, singing and playing guitar. And the wonderful thing about that is there's nothing to distract you from Stacey's quavering vocals, Mark's delicate guitar picking, and the kind of chemistry you get after ten years of marriage. It features all the same

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Dave Alexander - Editor, Canadian Guitar Players Association

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songs that are on the first one, just done without all the keyboards, organs, and strings. Personally, I've always felt that Stacey's records have suffered from overproduction, and this is exactly what she needs to showcase her and Mark's considerable talents. They share song writing duties on this one, both having a substantial song catalog from their respective solo careers. So maybe they're not songwriters like her brother Steve; they've still got stories to tell, and have his gift of intimacy and drawing you into a song.

So it stands to reason that *Must Be Live*, the double live discs the two have just released, has all the wonderful attributes of *In the Ruff*, and then some. The songs were extracted from recordings made at 40 different concerts. In the liner notes, they state that while compiling the album, they chose songs with energy and personality over musical perfection. The end result is fabulous. Again, just the two of them, accompanied by their guitars and Mark's harmonica, but the passion and feeling that radiate from the music fill the stage and your ears with the sound of a much bigger band. The songs are a mix of Mark's, Stacey's from her previous solo records, and a handful of co-written tunes. From the rag sounds of *Girl from Louisiana* to the excellent version of *Cried My Heart Out*, this album is a standout.

If you only have money and space enough for one more Stacey Earle album in your collection, make it *Must Be Live*. But try to give them both a listen.

— By Shawna Biamonte

## Ma Maren Ma

Jony Iliev & Band  
Asphalt Tango Records

Kjustendil, near Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria is home to tens of thousands of Gypsies. Jony Iliev

was influenced by their music, especially that which was played by his own family. As a vocalist and songwriter, Iliev is a purveyor of the new Bulgarian Roma-Sound. He writes about growing up in Sofia, the night life, and fantasies about the American dream. His band has an extremely intense groove that is passionate and danceable. *Ma Maren Ma* has an unmistakable Eastern European feel, with Iliev's incredible voice resonating through the entire album. This is swing with soul!

— By Paula E. Kirman

## Gabriel Yacoub

The Simple Things We Said  
(Les Choses Les Plus Simple)  
Prime  
PCD77

Gabriel Yacoub is one of France's foremost musicians, with over 30 releases to his credit. He first came to the fore as teenage guitarist and singer with Brittany's pioneering harpist Alan Stivell in the early 1970s. He went on to found the influential French folk/roots group Malicorne. Since then he has covered many musical styles from la chanson française to pop. He has been called everything from the *le Dylan Français* to the Gallic answer to Peter Dinklage. His press kit bulges with ecstatic quotes such as "Songs that are of unique intelligence, rare azure pearls that radiate the brilliance of their writer's talent."

He lives up to his reputation with apparent ease on this all-acoustic release. This is a gorgeous collection of songs, including four in English, some old and some new, plus some previously unreleased. All are new recordings made in Paris in 2001. Stand out tracks are the title track which bookends the CD starting with the English version and ending with the French, *Letter from America* which features as-

tonishing interplay between bassoon and slide guitar and *You Stay Here* which is a typically cinematic story penned by Richard Shindell.

Monsieur Yacoub is obviously a multi talented individual. His writing, singing, playing, arrangement and production are all outstanding. "*La passion dans la voix du chanteur Français Gabriel Yacoub abat toutes les barrières de langage*" said the Boston Globe. I couldn't have put it better myself.

— By Tim Readman

## Traveler

Tim O'Brien  
Sugar Hill  
SUG-CD-3978

While some artists wait years for songs to come to them, new material seems to ooze from the pores of Tim O'Brien. The inspiration for the 11 originals (of 12 on this CD) come from O'Brien's travels around the world in his 30-year musical career, a project that in less capable hands might be a stretch.

O'Brien, however, somehow manages to craft listenable songs from the mundane, including smelly articles of clothing. *Kelly Joe's Shoes* are about a pair of Converse sneakers apparently discarded by musician Kelly Joe Phelps. The footwear turned out to be O'Brien's favorite traveling shoes for some period of time, taking him to London, Dublin, New York and a rainy bluegrass festival somewhere in the mountains (I suspect Telluride, Colorado). The themes include troublesome affairs, a house allegedly visited by the ghost of a Confederate soldier, dark family histories and introspective reflections on life and death.

As usual with O'Brien, a lineup of tasteful musicians provides stellar accompaniment: Jerry Douglas (resophonic guitar), Dirk Powell (banjo, bass, accordion, you name it) Casey Driessen (fiddle). A moody, delicious album.

— By Bob Remington

## Neil Mulligan

An Cobar Gle  
Spring Records  
SCD1049

Like his previous two releases, *An Cobar Gle* has Neil Mulligan, master of the uilleann pipes, playing unaccompanied, save for the last two tracks, *The Fermoy Lassies* and *Chase Her Through the Garden*, which feature his father Tom's unusual style of fiddle playing. It takes a remarkable man to make an hour of solo uilleann piping palatable, even if they are less shrill than their Scottish cousins. Neil Mulligan has the skills and more. Some of the best songs are the ones he composed himself, including the heartbreakingly lovely *Caitriona Rua*, composed for his mother after her death. The fingering and timing precision on *I Buried my Wife and Danced on Top of Her* are awe-inspiring, and after that things get rowdy right up until the last song, which will have you jiggling before you know it, once you get used to the roughness of Tom's fiddle. Unless you are already



a fan of traditional Irish music in general and piping more specifically, it might take a few tries to really get what he's doing here, but try it anyway. It will be well worth the effort.

— By Shawna Biamonte

## Kandia Kouyate

Biriko  
Stern's Music  
STCD1095

In the last decade the spotlight has glanced across the African continent more than once as our well-connected domain allows us access to the music of the entire world. African music offers much to the western listener, rhythmically and melodically, and the artists of Mali in particular have stamped their mark brilliantly on the great catalogue of options from the troubled continent. Finally too, their CD's are making into stores over here.

Kandia Kouyate is revealed as a magnificent vocalist, who demands attention not only for her full-bodied voice and consummate singing skill, but also for her totally tuned in lyrics. In *Biriko* she brings her awesome talents to bear on some socially engaged subjects, revolving around the hard lot of women in a venerable but deeply traditional society. Being one wife among many, bearing children in difficult and dangerous circumstances, being forced to accept a husband's outside infidelities, surviving the brutality of military conflicts, Kandia speaks up and opines on all these subjects, albeit in her own dialect. The brief synopsis in the notes, accompanied by the smart rhythms, beautiful arrangements, and the engaging passion of her voice, makes for an entrancing package of music of the soul and for the soul. In short, she is a knockout, immensely likeable, pulsating with vital energy, and seemingly gifted with strong powers of communication. The backings by Malian musicians are full of integrity and creative spirit.

— By Lark Clark

## Jalikunda Cissokho

Lindiane  
Jalikunda  
JAL001

Jalikunda Cissokho celebrate life through music, and they do it joyfully and with skill. On *Lindiane*, the group performs original songs based on the traditions of the Mandinka of the Southern Senegal region of Casamance. The kora with its sparkling, harp-like sound is the dominant instrument on the album augmented by the rumbling beat of West African percussion instruments such as the djembe and the calabash. Spirited vocals (shared among various members of the group) lend power to the message of the songs which explore themes such as the importance of education, the desire for tolerance and the power of music to change the world.

The seventeen members of Jalikunda Cissokho (thirteen members of the Cissokho family and four guests) are talented musicians, and the ideas conveyed through their music are

appealing. However, even on repeated listening there is a certain sameness to the music on this album. There are certainly no low points on the album, but alas no high points either.

— By Linda Slater

## Various Artists

The Rough Guide to Scottish Music  
World Music Network  
(RNET 1110 CD)

This is the second Rough Guide to Scottish Music, a different collection than the first edition. Compiled by Pete Heywood, editor of *The Living Tradition*, there's no doubt that it would challenge anyone to put together a one disc overview of Scottish roots music. However, since the disc purports to present "some of the key artists and talent in Scotland today", I'm left wondering why Heywood left off Shoglenifty, Brian McNeill, Talitha MacKenzie, Jock Tamson's Bairs, Salsa Celtica, John McCusker, Mouth Music, Peatbog Faeries, Dougie MacLean, or Dick Gaughan, to name a few? To be fair, some of these artists did show up on the first edition, so perhaps this one was intended to go back more to "the roots". The end result, though, is a somewhat sedate collection that takes in Jack Beck, Christine Primrose, Battlefield Band, Blazin' Fiddles, Alison McMorland, Boys of the Lough, Capercaille, and more of the same. It's all worthy stuff (except for an ill-advised set of "calypso" pipe tunes from Robert Mathieson) but in aggregate a tad uninspiring. Ho hum.

— By Richard Thornley

## David Grisman

Life of Sorrow  
Acoustic Disc  
ACD53

Bluegrass purists will be pleased with this collection of songs recorded by mandolin guru David Grisman over a span of more than 30 years with some of the greats of traditional bluegrass. "The songs share common threads of human trials and tribulations; themes of unrequited love, heartache, tragedy, incarceration and death," Grisman writes in the liner notes. Fifteen tracks are listed, but whether by mistake or elfish mischief, Grisman includes *Keep On The Sunny Side*, sung by Mac Wiseman, in a hidden track at the end. After 60 minutes and 16 seconds of pain and sorrow, perhaps the old hippy just wanted to cheer up listeners with the familiar Carter family refrain to "keep on the sunny side of life."

The recordings range from sparsely arranged duets with John Hartford (*Doin' My Time*, recorded in 1994), John Nagy

(*Pretty Saro*, 1969) and Bryan Bowers (*Farther Along*, 1991) to rousing treatments with the Del McCoury Band (*We Can't Be Darlings Anymore*, *Cabin of Love* and *Unwanted Love*, all in 1997) and Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys (*All the Good Times are Past and Gone Bad*, 1996).

The history of each song is nicely annotated, providing background even on public domain recordings with information on who first popularized the material. Grisman deserves a medal for preserving the musical and historical integrity of this music.

— By Bob Remington

## Various Artists

The Rough Guide to the Music of the Appalachians  
World Music Network  
RNET 1104 CD

Of the deluge of bluegrass and old-time compilations to come out following *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, this ranks as one of the better efforts. Although, the information in the liner notes could be better. Rather than a standard, abridged bio of Ralph Stanley, for instance, the producers could have mentioned that Stanley hosts his own festival every U.S. Memorial Day weekend on the Clinch Mountain homestead where he was raised.

The selection of material, however, is very good, including tunes by little-known but deserving artists like Tom Adams (a great instrumental called *Box Elder Beetles*), Ginny Hawker, Rafe Stefanini and Dock Boggs, along with the likes of The Toney Rice Unit, Ralph Stanley, Norman and Nancy Blake and Del McCoury.

— By Bob Remington

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PENGUIN  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

Recordings

## Guy Davis

Chocolate To The Bone  
Red House Records  
RHR CD 164)

Guy Davis has released increasingly powerful records that highlight pre-WW II blues with a strong African-American presence. Acoustic tradition rules yet he is prone to blending his own strong blues tracks alongside traditional country and Chicago fare. A case in point – which you should run out and hear now – is *Set A Place For Me*: a beautiful composition which, although reminiscent of John Lee Hooker, undoes everything I have just said. Which demonstrates Guy Davis' potential for being full of surprises and adept at all definitions of the blues, traditional or otherwise. Like Pete Seeger, he delivers stories to music and proves himself to be a one-man musical adventure. No less so on this release which mixes six of his own songs with works by Hooker, Sleepy John Estes, Willie Dixon and Charles Brown.

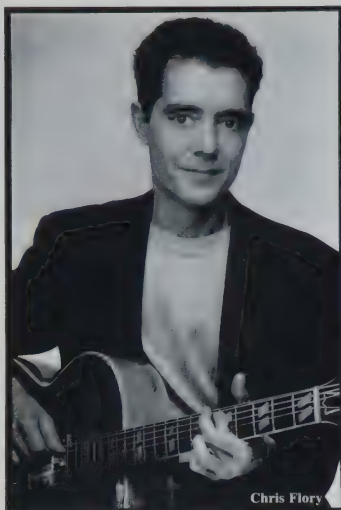
Hooker's *I Believe I 'll Lose My Mind* updates the original and elevates it sonically, if not soulfully. *Tell Me Where The Road Is* is a Davis original which showcases his Waits-like gruff vocals as well as his significant finger-picking abilities on six-string guitar. This guy cannot be overlooked for another minute. A great discovery for anyone whose blues need some originality without the sacrifice of tradition.  
– By Eric Thom

## Orchestra Baobab

Bamba  
Stern's Africa  
STCD3003

*Bamba* is the re-issue of two classic Orchestra Baobab albums – *Mouhamadou Bamba* (originally released in 1980) and *Sibou Odi* (1981). The Senegalese group melds the rhythms of Afro-Cuban dance music with the influences from the Wolof and Mandinka traditions of their homeland. The members of Orchestra Baobab are a very accomplished group of musicians. The nimble lead guitar of Barthélemy Attissou sizzles on every piece and the saxophones of Issa Cissokho and Peter Udo add additional spice to the arrangements. Vocal duties are shared by four band members, and to a man their vocal styling is exceedingly smooth and inviting.

The sound quality on the first half of the album (the *Mouhamadou Bamba* cuts) is much smoother and well-balanced than the *Sibou Odi* cuts. Not that there's anything wrong with the *Sibou Odi* cuts. The more in your face instrumentals produce a rawer, more spirited sound while, ironically, the vocals have a muted, almost retro quality. The last cut on the album, *Sibou Odi*, is a standout building in funkiness and intensity over the 13-plus minutes of the song and featuring a blistering Hendrix meets Santana guitar solo by Attissou.



Chris Flory

For Orchestra Baobab fans, *Bamba* is a must have album. For others the album stands as one of the finest introductions to the sultry, laid back rhythms of West African dance music.

– By Linda Slater

## Les Yeux Noirs

Live  
World Village

Les Yeux Noirs is a Klezmer-Middle Eastern folk band from France. The energy and life found on their previous studio albums is multiplied and amplified on *Live*. A collection of songs, including from last year's *Balamouk*, the musical journey is led by Eric and Olivier Slabak's violin duos and duels. With a very heavy Klezmer influence, these songs in Yiddish and French also have a rock edge to them that gives the performance some major intensity. *Live* is for people who otherwise don't like Klezmer.

by Paula E. Kirman

## Chris Flory

Blues In My Heart  
Stony Plain  
SPCD 1288

Chris Flory may have blues in his heart but jazz pulses deep through his veins. This highly satisfying Charlie Christian/Wes Montgomery-schooled trip ably demonstrates Flory's jazz chops as it explains the connection with disc producer, Duke Robillard. A common origin (Rhode Island) and a common love for the blues guitar of Tiny Grimes, Billy Butler and Bill Jennings cement their relationship as drummer Chuck Riggs, bassist Marty Ballou and guests, Scott Hamilton on tenor sax (Chris was a staple of Scott's popular Quartet, '76-'93) and Sugar Ray Norcia on a vocal or two, round out the package. Everything swings here

with the authenticity of the real deal, as it happened as opposed to how it was interpreted to have happened. Flory's significant contributions to the genre speak volumes. The material skirts jazz and swing standards but the more blues-based tracks, like Gene Ammons *Scam* and *I've Got A Right To Sing The Blues*. The tone achieved by Flory and Robillard on *Willow Weep For Me*, alone, will raise a goosebump or two. In fact, guitar fans will marvel at how seamlessly these two guitarists fit together and wonder, at the same time, why Flory hasn't made a big splash long before now. Perhaps with Duke's help, he will.

– By Eric Thom

## Pernice Brothers

Yours, Mine & Ours  
Ashmont Records  
ASHM006

A pleasant sounding mix of vocal harmonies and nice guitar-playing, with the smoothness of U.K. pop thrown in; unfortunately, there's just not enough memorable songs to distinguish them from hundreds of other harmony/guitar, slightly alt-country, Americana bands out there.

– By Barry Hammond

## GiveWay

Full Steam Ahead  
Greentrax Recordings  
CDTRAX245

You should never judge a book by its cover. Lucky for GiveWay that I know that otherwise this would have hit the trash without bouncing. The Partridge Family style cover photos do them no justice at all. Grimacing, I chuckled this offering by four teenage Scottish sisters on to the CD player expecting the worst and was blown away by the maturity and classiness of their playing. Excellent production by the old master Phil Cunningham elevates this all instrumental offering to the top flight.

Seventeen-year-old Fiona (fiddle, whistles), 15-year-old Kirsty (accordions), and 13-year-old twins Amy (drums, percussion) and Mairi Johnson (keyboards, synthesiser) are destined for fame and fortune and seem to be having great fun getting there. No pretence and no bullshit – just great music that belies their tender years. Now if only I can have a word with them about album cover design then all should be well!

– By Tim Readman

## Down to the Wood

Up All Night  
Independent

If they were to give a medal for late-night stammina at any bluegrass festival in Alberta over the past few years, the hands-down winners would be Marc Ladouceur, Curtis Appleton and Glen Hoffart of the popular Edmonton bluegrass trio, Down to the Wood. When it came to after-hours jam sessions, the trio would invariably be the last



standing, packing it in just as the rooster crowed. Thus, the title of their debut, *Up All Night*, a self-produced, 12-track disc that should bring the band wider notice.

Known for their on-stage energy and tight, three-part harmonies, the band is a treat to watch, playing in the old bluegrass style around a single microphone. Ladouceur is a tasteful and inventive flatpicker, coming from a blues and Celtic background to emerge as one of the better bluegrass guitarists in western Canada and switching competently to mandolin when required. Appleton is a solid banjo player and no slouch as a guitarist, and Hoffart is rock steady on bass.

The CD is collection of bluegrass staples, although few are standards. The band is tradition bound, yet mix in progressive and modern artists like Tim O'Brien (*Hard Pressed*), Herb Pederson (*Rambler's Blues*) and Don Rigsby (*Only Time Can Mend A Broken Heart*) with the likes of Bill Monroe and Lester Flatt. Ladouceur's blues roots come out in Robert Johnson's Crossroad Blues, which they bleed into Monroe's *The Old Crossroads*. Appleton proves an adept songwriter with the only original, *Shameless Drive*.

As with many self-produced first CDs, production is a bit spotty, with some instrumental breaks too far back in the mix, but this is still an enjoyable and listenable CD.

Fans feel somewhat robbed, however. Now that DTTW is headlining at festivals, the trio can no longer afford to stay up all night.

—By Bob Remington

## Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder

Live at the Charleston Music Hall  
Skaggs Family Records  
6989010042

Ricky Skaggs and his band, Kentucky Thunder, are surely not of this planet. Mere mortals cannot play this good, this fast, and sing flawless harmony to boot. To see them live is, as one reviewer noted,

a jaw-dropping experience. They play bluegrass like acoustic rock — hard, fast and loud, coming at you like a out of control bus. The CD faithfully captures the band's live shows, down to almost the exact set list Skaggs uses on tour. It is doubtful if more powerful bluegrass has been played since Bill Monroe's seminal band with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs in the late '40s.

The CD ends with an exhausting jam on Monroe's instrumental version of *Get Up John*, with the distinct open tuning that Monroe somehow concocted on mandolin. It opens just a frenetically, with *Black Eyed Suzie*, a number that let's you know right off the top that this is straight-up bluegrass: "Love my woman, love my babies, love my biscuits sopped in gravy."

To his huge, seven-member band, Skaggs on this CD recruited Bobby Hicks for twin fiddle work with the amazing Andy Leftwich, and Jeff Taylor on that most un-bluegrass of instruments, the accordion, which Skaggs uses on his rousing Celtic tribute, *Goin' to the Ceili*.

Skaggs builds the group first around vocals, handled mainly by himself, Darren Vincent and the amazingly high tenor of Paul Brewster. Around this he gathers two of the hottest young pickers in bluegrass, Leftwich (also a phenomenal mandolin player) and Cody Kilby on guitar, veteran banjo player Jim Mills and bass player Mark Fain.

—By Bob Remington

## Scott Merritt

The Detour Home  
Maplemusic  
MRCD 6403

Although completed sometime ago, Scott Merritt's latest release *The Detour Home* has found its way to much of the public through his recent summer festival appearances.

This, his first release in over a decade, follows the brilliant *Violet and Black* which was detoured itself into the Duke Street Records dead end.

One of Canada's finest and most overlooked

tunesmiths, Merritt has woven a rich textured, multi-layered sonic tapestry, full of images and innuendo. He deconstructs traditional folk-rock composition as he takes us to a few of his favorite spots, as he says "trying to catch the feeling of a place like Port Dover or Long Point, Ontario, on a short beat up beach at the end of summer, when everyone has gone home." He succeeds masterfully with stark, plaintive yet hopeful songs like *Thimbleful, Swallowin' the Key*, or *Temporary Tattoo*.

Underlying optimism is again the key to *Dragonfly and Beautiful Mess*, the story of a tiny radio with something to say. Merritt, who has produced albums for Fred Eaglesmith, The Grievous Angels, and Ian Tamblyn, wonderfully compliments production, music and lyric. This time he enlist the help of Cash Brothers drummer Peter Van Althen, and Bruce Cockburn's Gary Craig, as well as guest guitarist atmospherics by Bill Dillon and keyboards by The Band's Richard Bell.

As we savor the last days of summer, *The Detour Home* is a post-summer holiday.

—By Jay Knutson

## Dave Clarke

Guitar Songs  
Independent  
CD1003

Sometimes there are CDs that even after several listens don't leave an impression. It's not that they are bad, it's just hard to remember one song from the next. After listening through the Dave Clark album from top to bottom I couldn't recall, a song, lick or melody. Even the title *Guitar Songs* could hardly have been less inspiring.

As part of Steel Rail and back up to songwriter David Francey, Dave Clark has displayed his musical prowess. He's even gracious enough to clue the listener in to the style and tuning of each song in the liner notes. The execution is precise, production is simple and clear, and pleasant melodies are supported by colourful albeit predictable chord progressions.

*Guitar Songs* falls nicely into the easy listening category, which of course equates to not really listening at all. It's a one of those discs to put on after a tough day at the office, maybe for meditation, or to entertain friends. This is music to cook dinner by

—By Jay Knutson

## Jalilah Feat & Ihsan Al-Mounzer

Raks Sharki 6: In A Beruit Mood  
Piranha  
CD-PIR 1788

Raks Sharki is the proper term for oriental dance, otherwise known as belly dancing. Jalilah is an American of German and Mexican descent who has devoted her life to the art of the dance and became a Raks Sharki pioneer in the early 80's. This



is her sixth album of Raks Sharki music, and her second collaboration with Lebanese conductor Ihsan Al-Mounzer. The theme of the album, *In a Beirut mood*, comes from the idea that Beirut is one of the most important centers for Oriental dance, together with Cairo. For this album, Jalilah is the artistic director, while Al-Mounzer conducts an orchestra of violins, cello, oud, kanoun, nay (a type of flute), tabla and accordion. All the songs were written, and in some cases arranged, to be danced to in the Raks Sharki style. Being a non-dancer myself, it can be a bit hard to appreciate the subtleties of the music. However, every track that highlights the work of the famous Lebanese drummer Bassem Yazbek is a standout, especially the one paired with the nay, *Ali's Nay*. As well, there's a lovely Lebanese folk song that has been arranged for *Raks Sharki*, and features a beautiful chorus of Arabic vocals. As for the rest of the album: well as I said, I'm a non-dancer. And unless you are, I would recommend this for fans of

the genre only.

— By Shawna Biamonte

## Craig Moreau

Every Now & Then  
Buffalo Skull Records  
BSKL002

Craig Moreau has a husky, baritone voice that sounds very familiar. Sounding not unlike a countryified version of Ronnie VanZant, he has, instead, much more in common with Texan, Townes Van Zandt. His folk leanings travel in the same sad yet soulful territory, yet there is a warmth to his overall approach that is instantly endearing. The musicianship on this record is top-notch due, in part, to producer Tim Williams and his genius with stringed instruments of all kinds, notably 12-string, 5-string banjo and lap steel. Tom Moon plays drums; Ron Casat on bass, organ and accordion; Ben Tagseth guests on guitar. Moreau jumps around a bit in his influences — tapping into Nashville country (*Couldn't Have Done It Any Better*); straight folk (*A Mother's Love*); a hint of reggae (*Not The Thought Of You*). However, the best tracks on the album are the ones that contrast Craig's deep voice with the stark, country-flavoured vocals provided by Jane Hawley (*Every Now And Then/The Final Price Of Grain/The Temptress*). This combination is eye-opening! He's also at his best when he approximates the Tom Russell/Guy Clark sounds that capitalize on Williams' sizeable production skills, reinforcing each composition with rich instrumental textures (*I Got News For You, I Never Said Goodbye*). The bottom line is, this guy is a raw talent waiting to get out. His songs, alone, are destined to have a life of their own yet he has proven, with this release, fully capable of delivering the goods himself.

— By Eric Thom

## Kim Wilson

Lookin' For Trouble  
M-C Records  
MC-0049

Kim Wilson has been about trouble since Muddy Waters first gave him the nod for his stand-out harp-playing and singing abilities. Wilson's grueling schedule of 200 plus shows a year keeps him 'in school' as it qualifies him in his role as torchbearer to the Chicago blues harp legacy. This follow up to last year's Handy-nominated disc mines a grab-bag of styles: West Coast to Memphis, Chicago to Texas and New Orleans. *Lookin' For Trouble* further validates Wilson's status as a songwriter. His exceptional *Love Attack* and equally powerful *Looking For Trouble* fit seamlessly alongside such classics as Willie Dixon's *Love My Baby* and Snooky Pryor's *Tried To Ruin Me*. The raw muscle of his harpwork on *Fat* to more subtle touches on Jimmy Rogers' *Money Marble & Chalk* demonstrate Wilson's masterful harp command. His vocal range adds fun to *Love My Baby* while his Wolf-take on *Hand to Mouth* samples the power of his voice. The '50s-sounding *Hurt On Me* swings hard while the instrumental, *Jr.'s Jump*, struts a bluesy stuff like few instrumentals before it. All blues artists should have such trouble.

— By Eric Thom

## The Guitar and The Gun

Various Artists  
Stern's/Earthworks  
STEW50CD

A re-issue of a two volume compilation of music recorded between 1981-1984 (a period of unrest in Ghana, hence the title), this album provides listeners with a sampling of various sub-genres of Ghanaian highlife. The most appealing cuts on the album are those drawn from the dance band and concert party styles of highlife represented by F. Kenya's Guitar Band and Wofa Rockson and His highlife Dance Band. The electric guitars are handled masterfully and the tight bustling rhythms of these styles are infectious. A little rougher around the edges, the pieces representing the gospel highlife style take some getting used to, but upon repeated listening the high-pitched, slightly off-key voices and tinny guitars of groups such as the Genesis Gospel Singers and the Baptist Disciple Singers come to possess a special charm of their own.

Those new to African music and Ghanaian music in particular may find the album difficult to appreciate, but those acquainted with West African music will find this opportunity to explore the highlife stylings of the early '80s both satisfying and educational.

— By Linda Slater

## Abdullah Chhadeh and Nara

Abdullah Chhadeh and Nara  
ABYC Records  
Chh2002

Abdullah Chhadeh is a Syrian musician who moved to England to study composition. His instrument is the qanun, (which doesn't seem to have enough u's in it, but which does have 81 strings) which are plucked either with picks or with the fingers. The tone of the instrument remains an unfolding source of surprise - deeply rich, with a raw resonance.

The success of Ravi Shakar prepared us for the long attention span, or at least the suspension of busyness, required to appreciate this music. The album tracks are eight, ten, and thirteen minutes in duration, with one track a more Western-tailored length, four minutes, featuring a vocal from visiting artist Natacha Atlas.

Recorded before an enthusiastic and knowledgeable audience at the WOMEX conference in Rotterdam, the instruments are played with real gusto, even bravado. One of the great moments of the album comes when, after a sustained and slow introduction, the qanun takes flight, only to be joined by a jazzy double bass, played by Irish musician Bernard O'Neill.

This music grows on you as you become familiar with the style and sound of the Syrian qanun. Good for evenings alone, or with the kind of friends who relish new experiences.

— By Lark Clark

## Old Blind Dogs

The Gab o Mey  
Green Linnet  
GLED 1223

From the opening track it is evident that despite personnel changes it is still very much business as usual for Scotland's own OBD. Which is not to say that they haven't progressed. Indeed this their eighth release provides ample evidence of their innovative and imaginative approach to music making. Jim Malcolm has ably filled the large shoes vacated by former guitarist/vocalist Ian Benzie since the late 90's and Rory Campbell (pipes and whistles) who joined around the same time adds his considerable talents to the groups instrumental work. New boy Fraser Stone (percussion) is the band's irresistible heartbeat. Founder members Jonny Hardie (fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and backing vocals) and Buzzby McMillan (electric bass, cittern and backing vocals) are outstanding as always.

There are five instrumentals and five songs all of which are excellent. *The Whistler*, is strongly rhythmic and features a rocking blues solo from Malcolm's harmonica. *The Breton & Galician Set* is a fresh take on the music of these two Celtic outposts. The opening song *Money Musk Lads* has a great groove and wonderful singing especially on the chorus. *The Wisest Fool*, written by Malcolm is a well sung tale about the fated Stuart dynasty which includes some fine border piping. Whether like me you are a died-in-the-wool fan or a newcomer to the OBD my message to you is the same. This is an essential purchase.

— By Tim Readman



## David Newland

Evergreen  
Shelter Valley Productions  
DLN 0001

A bare bones affair, recorded at the Evergreen in East Margaretsville, Nova Scotia on August 10th, 2002, Evergreen is probably meant to be sold off the stage at the artist's live shows and, as such, likely reflects pretty well what they're like. The Ottawa-born Newland has lived in Montreal, where he picked up a fine arts degree in photography, and has traveled the world (including India, and a year-and-a-half at the recording's location) both as a photographer and a busker. He now makes his home in Toronto. Newland has a decent, resonant voice and is a competent finger-picker and harmonica player in traditional folk style. His songs are serious and crafted but, as a recording, the disc suffers slightly from a one-note sameness in tone and dynamics for its entire duration. The songs are all solemn, sincere ballads with identical polite applause and thank-yous at the end. A little more variety in both material and ambience would have been appreciated by this listener.

— By Barry Hammond

## George Shuffler & Laura Boosinger

Mountain Treasures  
Copper Creek  
Copper Creek CCCD-0217

## Chris Brashear & Peter McLaughlin

Canyoneers  
Copper Creek  
CCCD-0222

## The Crooked Jades

The Unfortunate Rake:  
Vol. 2 (Yellow Mercury)  
Copper Creek  
CCCD-2005

## Kazuhiro Inaba

Teardrop On A Rose  
Copper Creek  
CCCD-0216

Why so many hard-core bluegrass fans limit themselves to such a restricted definition of the genre is a mystery. Fortunately, those with a more open attitude can find much to enjoy in styles that are on the periphery of the genre. For example, the following albums don't qualify as bluegrass, strictly speaking, but the artists all circle their wagons around the idiom. Most of them also confirm the adage that sometimes less is more.

Carol Elizabeth Jones and Laurel Bliss are two singers and guitarists whose debut is an absolute gem. On material ranging from the Carter Family and Ola Belle Reed to The Whitstein Brothers, not to mention four Jones originals, the duo's exquisite harmonies are accompanied by the consistently reliable John Reischman (mandolin), Ruthie



Serena Ryder: Groovy Mondays

Dornfeld (fiddle), and Nancy Katz (bass). *Girl From Jericho* is bound to turn some heads and perk some ears.

George Shuffler is known as a fixture on the bluegrass scene (mostly as guitarist and influential bass player for The Stanley Brothers and others) and Laura Boosinger is known for her work with The Luke Smathers String Band and for her solo work. On their debut as a duo they perform simple yet elegant renditions of mostly familiar traditional songs from the Carolina hills, many of them having a strong blues undercurrent.

Both Shuffler and Boosinger are distinctive and expressive singers and Boosinger is also a wonderful clawhammer banjo player. Chris Brashear has one previous album to his credit and has been playing and singing with Peter McLaughlin in the traditional supergroup known as Perfect Strangers. On *Canyoneers*, their debut as a duo, they sing mostly originals and a few Delmore Brothers songs, interspersed with a few instrumental tunes. It's all very ably done, with no outside help, but not as immediately gripping as the two other duo albums under review.

The Crooked Jades are a San Francisco-based old-time band whose second album includes a generous 23 tracks, including 13 traditional tunes and 10 originals. The album was produced by Richard Buckner, who also sings lead on a couple of songs. Half a dozen other guests also contribute.

The group is inspired by the old-time bands of the 1920s, which were known for their eclectic material and their varied instrumentation. The group revives and updates the style in admirable fashion.

Kazuhiro Inaba is a well-known Japanese bluegrass and acoustic country musician. On his second Copper Creek CD he pays tribute to one of his heroes, with five of the ten songs written by Hank Williams and at least one more covered by him. The arrangements are uncluttered to the point of being stark, with Inaba's vocals and guitar accompanied only by Buddy Spicher on fiddle and viola,

Bob Moore on upright bass, and Keith Little and Kathy Chiavola on harmonies. The vocals are straight-forward and unaffected and the fact that the singer sings with a Japanese accent doesn't diminish the quality of the heartfelt performances.

— By Paul-Émile Comeau

## Various Artists

Groovy Mondays  
The ArtsCan Circle  
GM2003

At first glance, the butterfly gracing the cover of *Groovy Mondays* should pull you kicking and screaming back to the decade that time forgot. But beyond philanthropy of musicians helping native youth at risk and the bare-basics simplicity of recording, there's not a snippet of the '70s to be found on this 19-track compilation of live performances from Holy Joe's in Toronto.

With its tightly wound line-up of performers each entering immediately on the applause of the previous singer, the CD has the feel of a song-circle. In some cases, the sound is too live, and the audience reaction, with whoops of approval heard on almost every track, often seems contrived or claqued. Of the performers, two rate special attention. Jory Nash opens the album with *Prisoner's Lament*, from his own CD, *Tangle with the Ghost*, released in 2000. The narrator's bad-luck childhood and leave-taking has resulted in an admittedly short-lived career as a sailor. The predicament that lands him in prison is a captain tossed over the rail — "and that was the first day that we set sail." It is Nash's matter-of-fact delivery that sells this pathetic yarn with its haunting refrain as the prisoner awaits his hanging: "Ah, but Lord will you bury a fool such as me / And carry me up to eternity / I lied and I cheated, but I swear unto Thee / No more the wicked, no more, is me."

The most distinctive singing voice in the Groovy

53  
PENGUIN  
EGGS  
Autumn  
2003

Recordings

Mondays package is found in Serena Ryder's Buffy-esque vibrato on *Hiding Place*. While that might be deemed derivative, there is no denying the throaty emotionalism in Ryder's performance.

For information on the ArtsCan Circle program, the web-site is [www.artscancircle.ca](http://www.artscancircle.ca).

—By Gordon Morash

## La Sonera Calaveras

Numero Uno!  
Greentrax Recordings  
G2CD 7009

Okay, this whole fusion thing has gone way too far. Case in point? La Sonera Calaveras, a Scottish band that plays—wait for it—Cuban Son music. But here's the rub: they do it really well—never mind the fact that they originate in Glasgow. Robert Henderson is a terrific and convincing trumpet player. Gerardo Ballesteros delivers the lyrics in impeccable Spanish and plays a mean set of bongos to boot, while Ricky Manning plays such soulful guitar you figure a Cuban bloodline runs somewhere in his family.

Really, this sextet comes as a complete surprise. On a blind listen, an audiophile would be hard-pressed to place this group from Scotland. Bizarrely, they generate very convincing Cuban jazz, be it merengues or the 1920s Son style. In fact, La Sonera Calaveras are virtual virtuosos of Son, offering up different interpretations of the style, from the lyrically sad *Son of Lagrimas Negras* to the steamy romanticism of *Que Seria*.

While La Sonera Calaveras can sound a touch generic at points, for the most part they overcome any limitations and play an authentic-sounding Cuban roots music. Overall, it's a strong debut for this rather odd but enjoyable band.

—By Charles Mandel

## Wolfstone

Not Enough Shouting/Almost An Island  
Once Bitter Records  
OBRCD 001 & 002

There's something reassuring about putting on an album by Wolfstone. What you see (or hear in this case) is what you get. The coupling of power chords topped by the piping skills of Stephen Saint is a marriage made in heaven. The texture of Highland pipes played over the top of full blown rock backing appears to harness the raw energy generated by the rest of the band. Take for instance the track *La Grand Nuit du Port de Peche* where the fiddle and pipe melodies are picked up by the percussion and gently grooving bass before the interjection of drums and distorted electric guitar. Subtlety isn't really a word that readily springs to mind when describing the attributes of Wolfstone but having said that, you have to admire their restraint in production. Rather more interesting are the vocal performances of lead singer Stuart

Eaglesham, which take a little getting used to. I suppose I'm showing my age when I say that I remember the original recording by Andy M Stewart (in his Silly Wizard days) of *The Queen Of Argyll* and, unfairly or not his vocal rendition of the song is noticeably stronger than that of Stuart's. Without wishing to offend anyone, in my eyes this is a band that has nothing to prove other than they want to have a good time. So, if you like your music played in the comfort of your home choose *Almost An Island*. If, on the other hand you'd rather wave your candles in the air imagining you're at some green trouser-stained festival go for the *Not Enough Shouting* recording. While you're at it, why not pitch a tent in your front room, get a few beers and chuck-up behind the settee for that extra bit of reality? There has always been a place for this brand of stadium folk-rock and although Steeleye and Fairport were there before them Wolfstone have the edge in my opinion. Now what I'd really like to see is a double-bill of Wolfstone and Status Quo—my money would be on the Wolf!

—By Pete Fyfe

## Ray Abshire and Friends

For Old Times Sake  
Swallow  
SW-6173

## Les Freres Michot

La Roue Qui Pend  
Swallow  
SW-6174

## Kevin Naquin & The Ossun Playboys

Bayou Groove  
Swallow SW-6175

Those with a yen for old-fashioned Cajun music could very well have their needs fulfilled by these three new albums. Ray Abshire, cousin to the legendary Nathan Abshire, takes a particularly traditional approach. He was accordionist with the Balfa Brothers band when he decided to call it quits in the mid-70s, only to eventually re-emerge in the early 90s. On *For Old Times Sake*, his first album, he proves that he's still a very capable accordion player, as well as a good singer. His friends, namely Courtney Grangér and Kevin Wimmer (both of Balfa Toujours) and André Michot, are among the best of the new generation of Cajun musicians. André Michot also plays on *La Roue Qui Pend*, a belated follow-up to Les Frères Michot's debut, which Zachary Richard produced in 1987. Two of the five Michot names are different, being from the second generation, but the quality of the music is still strong. The album, which includes a generous 23 tracks and a 16-page booklet, also features some unusual material such as a rare Cajun yodeling song and some old church hymns that have never before been given this kind of Cajun treatment. Although only 24, Kevin Naquin is quite a bit older than the members of his group, which has been prolifically churning out albums and reaping awards. The 17-year-old guitarist Ashley Hayes takes lead vocals on a few

songs, and she sounds her age, but in this case that's not a bad thing. The group is really quite remarkable.

By Paul-Émile Comeau

## Norman Walker

"T" Time - Time Tested Tales,  
Tall and True  
Prairie Pagan Music  
PPM01

Born in Melaval, Saskatchewan, and based in Regina and Moose Jaw, Norman Walker, besides being known as an electrician by trade and an organizer for the Regina Folk Festival, is a singer and songwriter somewhat in the tradition of a Canadian Tom Lehrer. He spikes his mix of British folk, cowboy swing, and various traditional music with clever word play and sly humor. His wit ranges over such diverse topics as science fiction, Mexican sewer rats kept as pets, the gourmet delights of poodles, linoleum-laying budgie bird murderers, and immaculate conception by rifle shot. To balance the humor, he does tackle more serious topics as well, singing about apartheid, disappearing grain elevators, and a sense of community. There are even some wistfully sentimental songs about sunsets and Christmas, but its the humor that sticks in your mind. It's a lighthearted, cheerful collection with such talented guests as Paddy Tutty, Susan Bondi, Bob Evans, Ray Bell and David Essig contributing pleasant singing and instrumental backup. CBC radio should base a regular show around him.

—By Barry Hammond

## JP Jones

Life and Death  
Vision Company Records  
031703

Rhode Island's busiest Indie artist has to be JP Jones who's recorded nine CD's since his debut on Columbia in 1973, despite having five years of contract problems where he couldn't release anything. Jones has one of those world-worn but genuine voices in the way of such other singer/songwriters as Mark Knopfler, Greg Brown, or Bob Dylan himself. Tempering such basic folk influences is a taste for musical sophistication reminiscent of a John Cale. The backing band, Rite Tite, is a group of musical veterans who've all worked with Jones for a while: Louise Muller on violin, Mike Barrette on electric guitar, Kurt Meyer on bass, "Dr." Donn Watson on keyboards, Dave Lang on drums and percussionist Matthew Niebel. Together, they fashion a snaky, sinuous sound that skirts the edges of folk, rock, jazz, and world music, while managing to be its own thing. It's an airy, Leslie wind-propelled, vintage Hammond organ sound with either wailing fiddle or crying guitar sliding in and out of it, with in-the-groove drums and percussion carrying it along. It could find Jones a wider audience this time out.

—By Barry Hammond



## Wimme

Barru  
Northside  
NSD6074

Yoik singing in dance clubs - I can see it! This album is Wimme's fourth, with adept synth/sample electronica settings from Jari Kokkonen, and refreshing acoustic instrument textures by Matti Wallenjuss (my fave is banjo amidst techno-beat, track 3). Titles such as *Torrent*, *Arctic Tern*, *Wave*, and *Old Fox* suggest that the compositions are descriptive tone poems, and they are quite effective as such. However, finding some of the electronic tones and mathematically perfect rhythms more irritating than balm, I find myself yearning for what this CD very nearly accomplishes in the melding of bustling metropolitan vibe with the vast expanse and ageless humanity of Wimme's vocal landscape. An admirable foray into diffical *Bad* (*And That's Why You've Been Invited*) are sharp and sassy. This combination of torch and twang has worked well for others, notably k.d. lang and her muse, Patsy Cline, and it fits Mandell like an elbow-length, white glove.

- By Barry Hammond

## Dorris Henderson

Here I Go Again  
Market Square Music  
MSMCD117

Dorris Henderson started by learning the Alan Lomax song book and teaching herself the auto-harp then performing around folk clubs in her native USA. They say she rubbed shoulders with Bob Dylan but for all I know that might mean

standing next to him in the line-up at a bar. She moved to England in 1965 and ended up collaborating on two albums with John Renbourn. She then joined Trevor Lucas in Election and the rest is... well as far as I am concerned the rest is a bunch of name-dropping nonsense. This CD has some great playing on it but I can't stand her singing. She has peculiar pronunciation, phrasing and enunciation that defies description. But I will try. How about forced, mannered, guttural, ill advised and verging on the ridiculous just for a start? She covers Billie Holliday and immediately made me feel like I needed a long one. She does her own songs. I don't like them. She has John Renbourn join her on two tracks. He plays well. It doesn't help. I played this on the road to the Kispix Music Festival for the band. They laughed, they yelled and then made me take it off. It's a long drive. A puzzling choice from the usually tasteful folks at Market Square.

- By Tim Readman

## Ashley Hutchings

Human Nature  
Talking Elephant  
TECD053

I must admit to not having heard much by Ashley since the early Albion Band days (mind you, I did enjoy *Street Cries*) so I was intrigued although a little unsure of what to expect from his latest project Human Nature. Subtitled "a collection of new songs observing the human relationship with creatures and plants" does I suppose give a fully primed introduction of what is on the recording. Opening with the vocals of Steve Knightly the first track wouldn't sound out of place on a Strawbs recording. To my jaded ear

(possibly too much Celtic music) I sometimes find it hard to concentrate on lyrics but that doesn't stop me enjoying reading the words to songs while getting my head round an arrangement. And there are plenty of styles to pick from here. From the dramatic *Stand Quite Still* to the tongue in cheek *Rockery Rock* or the generous Brass Band treatment afforded to *This Blessed Plot* (sung superbly by Judy Dunlop & Barry Coope) all have their place woven together in the patch-worked continuity of the album. I don't know why but this album, due to its diversity shouldn't work as well as it does. I say this with the feeling that when it works - it works. When it doesn't it still has relevance in context of the overall picture. There's a certain kind of English eccentricity that shall forever remain a balance to me. I count Clifford T Ward, Peter Skellern and of course the vivid imagination of Ashley Hutchings as part of this. A bit of a curiosity (or not) depending on how you view Mr Hutchings recent works but an avenue well worth pursuing if you like to feel challenged - in the nicest possible way of course.

- By Pete Fyfe

## Kate Rusby & John McCusker

Heartlands  
Pure Records  
PRCD11

Question: when is a folk album not a folk album? Answer: when it's a soundtrack for a movie. And what a stunner - an outstanding contribution to the much-maligned art of the movie score. OK, so the format has been done before, notably with Titanic and Rob Roy etc., but not to my knowledge in such a full-fledged manner. In general songs have taken a back seat allowing the instrumental work to convey a message. Although there is plenty of that here from the prolific pen of Mr McCusker it is Kate's contribution that will leave a lasting impression. Again, it's those truly superb vocals with their effortless delivery that are etched indelibly on my mind and as I sit here writing this review I can't help but get caught up in the emotion of it all. Not to be outdone, however, the maturity of John's tune writing is full of surprises adding subtle textures of brass and even clarinet (unfortunately the musician isn't credited in the sleeve notes) on the air *Weeping Crisps*. The funny thing about this recording is that it fits so comfortably with the duo's previous recordings that to simply dismiss it as 'background music' would be to do it a disservice. So, file it under your record collection as a Rusby & McCusker collaboration of the finest order. I can thoroughly recommend *Heartlands* as one of my favourite albums this year and certainly in my top five soundtracks.

- By Pete Fyfe



Kate Rusby

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Autumn  
2003

Recordings



# Hardcore Troubador The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle

by Lauren St. John  
ISBN: 0-00-714942-5  
Fourth Estate / 404 pages / \$39.95  
Reviewed By Barry Hammond

There must be few people on the planet whose lives have been marked by such extreme highs and lows as that of singer/songwriter Steve Earle. Born into a family where there was a history of alcoholism and enduring a nomadic childhood, he dropped out of school to play guitar in local bands and got into rock and roll and heroin while still in his teens. Finding further inspiration in the song writing of such troubled heroes as Gram Parsons, Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark, he pursued a career where rock, folk, blues and country music all blended together. He also seemed determined to live up to the image of the American outlaw and rebel. After finally finding a hard-fought acceptance in Nashville with a ground-breaking album, *Guitar Town*, he embarked on an orgy of self-destruction. He sped through six marriages to five different women, leaving broken hearts and abandoned children (both legitimate and illegitimate); his heroin addiction spiraled out of control, he burned all his musical and business relationships to the ground, pawned his guitars, developed a morbid interest in guns and crack cocaine and eventually became virtually a homeless junkie, stumbling through the streets in search of his next fix. He got in car wrecks, lost his license and drove anyway, got in more car wrecks. Other street people tried to kill him. Everyone who knew him expected him to die.

Incredibly, he didn't. After hitting rock bottom and doing a stint in prison, he found the twelve-step program and cleaned up. Within a few years he'd resurrected his career and took it to even greater heights, became an ardent activist against the death penalty, published a well-received book of short stories and was celebrated as an American song-writing icon.

Lauren St. John, whose previous book, the acclaimed *Walkin' After Midnight* (A Journey To The Heart of Nashville) details Earle's harrowing life in all its contradiction and complexity. What emerges is the portrait of a fiercely intelligent but sometimes abrasively outspoken man, who stubbornly pursues his own vision against all comers. Earle comes from a large and loving family, whose own various inspiring stories are woven into the fabric of the book and their unconditional love and support of the wayward Earle helped in a large measure for him to become a survivor in spite of himself. It's a painfully honest book, and it's a credit to everyone from the author to the subject that they've tried to get it down as accurately and as unflinchingly as they

have. People talk about "warts and all," biographies. This is a biography where you view the warts in extreme close-up, see, feel and smell the dirt they grew out of, and hear them talk to you as well.

Some biographies wind up leaving their famous subjects still shrouded in mystery and enigma. St. John goes the limit to take you inside Earle's world and vision. You can think of Earle what you like, but after reading this book, you feel like you know and understand him.

## Songwriters On Songwriting by Paul Zollo

ISBN: 0-306-81265-7  
Da Capo Press / 730 pages / \$35.95  
Reviewed By Barry Hammond

If you're interested in the art and craft of songwriting, this book is a massive assemblage of interviews about the mysterious inspiration of where it comes from, the nuts and bolts of how to do it, the specific origins of classic examples of it, the joy and excitement of it, as well as the frustration and the sheer hard work of it, all told in the words of the people who've done it best in the last century.

Paul Zollo, himself a songwriter, author and music journalist, is the editor of *Song Talk*, the journal of the National Academy of Songwriters. All the interviews in this expanded fourth edition of the book first appeared in that publication and, as such, are focused tightly on the subject of songwriting and the creative process, "as opposed to the more celebrity-oriented queries often directed to them by the press," and the subjects seem both grateful, relieved and remarkably candid in discussing their primary interest with such a sympathetic ear.

Although the sixty-two subjects covered range from classic tin pan alley types like Sammy Cahn and Jay Livingston & Ray Evans, through folk legend Pete Seeger, the main focus of the book is those icons who came into prominence in the 1960's, when the likes of Gerry Goffin, Carole King, Leonard Cohen, Jimmy Webb, Lamont Dozier, Burt Bacharach & Hal David

and Bob Dylan changed forever both song structures and the idea of what popular songs could be about. This slight bias towards the latter half of the century is probably simply the result of the fact that people of this age group are old enough to have produced a significant body of work, and are/were still alive (at the time of the interviews) to be able to talk about it. In the cases where the subjects are no longer alive (such as Laura Nyro, Harry Nilsson, Frank Zappa, and Townes Van Zandt) we should be grateful to Zollo for having documented their thoughts before they passed away.

There's also plenty of interviews with artists from the 70's, 80's and 90's, like Jackson Browne, Mark Knopfler, Randy Newman, Lou Reed, R.E.M., Los Lobos, David Byrne, Tom Petty, and Loudon Wainwright III, who are still working, and a few younger types like Alanis Morissette or Meshell Ndegeocello, who may be pointing the way to the next century of songwriting.

It's the kind of book that can be read right through, since the arrangement of the subjects relates from one to the next, or dipped into at random if you're interested in a particular artist. There wasn't a single interview which didn't better reveal the subject — even the slightly cranky and paranoid one with Merle Haggard. One of the things this critic enjoys most about this kind of book is that the people you may be least interested in sometimes have the most interesting things to say. In that spirit, I'd recommend the reader dip into three or four of the interviews of those artists who you might not appreciate, or haven't heard of, and try those as well.

The only serious absences in the book are the Lennon-McCartney pairing from The Beatles and Jagger-Richards from The Rolling Stones, but the influences, especially of the first team, are talked about by others in the book so much that they're certainly there in spirit. There are some odd inclusions, but even those make interesting reading. Personally, I'd categorize jazz great Dave Brubeck as a composer, rather than a songwriter, but his interview was one of best in the book, focusing on his particular ideas about rhythm.

The brief biographical notes prior to each interview are also wonderfully informative and concise. Learning more details of Roger McGuinn's background or Lenny Kravitz's parentage helps to bring their music more in focus when it comes to matters of influence. The reader can see instantly why the author is also in demand as a writer of liner notes, as his way of placing a particular artist's contributions to the art of songwriting as a whole and to music in general is unerringly accurate. Another tremendous volume from the publishing house whose name is becoming synonymous with great music writing.



Steve Earle



## Salmon Arm Roots & Blues Festival

### Salmon Arm, BC

August 15 - 17

By David Ingram

The eleventh Salmon Arm Roots And Blues Festival was a memorable event for a number of reasons. The heat was intense on the dusty fairground site, although three of the six stages did provide some shade. The high temperatures also came on the tail of nearly two rain free months, and fires burned in the kindling dry forests about the area, smoke hazing the hills and turning the sky a yellowish brown. The sun shone through red as a tail-light, and ash fell from the sky like snow in autumn. Bits of BC were burning up, but so was the music.

The Friday evening opener featured a shakin' Cuban band, the smooth jazz stylings of veteran Toni Lynn Washington, and an awesome set from the standard bearer of Zimbabwe, Oliver Mtukudzi. The table was well set for the next two days of musical treats.

With five stages running throughout the day, Saturday's choices were head-spinning. Filippio Gambetta's trio were a good start, the young accordion master lithe and expressive on his tasty originals, Celso Machado nimble and inventive on guitars, flute, tambourine, cheeks and chest, Broderick fluid and spirited, the Wailin' Jennys healthy and harmonious, Wes Mackay's guitar restrained on some tasty blues, and Carolyn Mark full of bounce and beans.

The afternoon brought out more Africans. Pape and Cheikh from Senegal sang with a lot of soul and originality, and West African guitar supremo Djelimady Tounkara (more on him next issue) led a magnificent workshop with Ellen McIlwaine, Tantra, and Moroccan powerhouse Hassan Hakmoun.

But the ash and soot weren't the only fallout here. A few days earlier the massive failure of the electrical grid in eastern Canada had disrupted air traffic, and the travel plans of some key performers. Hakmoun and Mick Taylor had been delayed, Kendra Mac Gillivray, Samba Squad and Friday's headliner Chantal Kreviazuk hadn't made it at all. A crisis there was averted though, when on an hour's notice Colin James, in a grand gesture, had assembled a band and driven 360 km from Vancouver to close the first night's big show. Such is the draw of a festival that began 11 years ago with one headliner and five local bands, and through the vision and perseverance of artistic director Linda Tanaka has blossomed into a fabulous weekend offering 47 top acts.

Saturday night Michael Kaeshammer boogied his way into a few hearts, the Lee Boys rocked the park, and the spirits soared with a wonder set from Ireland's outstanding group Lúnasa. Roy Rogers and Norton Buffalo created a mini blues fest all by themselves, and Lee Aaron's warm jazz prepped the park for the pièce-de-resistance, a stunning set from Djelimady Tounkara's acoustic quintet. The Malian master's daughter Mariam sang beautifully, as did Lafia Diabaté, and together with djembe

and 2nd guitar laid out some gorgeous backing for the guitarist's sparkling and elegant solos.

Sunday morning started appropriately with Blind Mississippi Morris' powerful voice shouting out Little Red Rooster, clucking and crowing his way through an adlib verse to the delight of an audience sitting on hay bales near the fairground stables. Among a sheaf of workshops and fine concerts were a stormin' performance from Mighty Popo, more brilliance from Lúnasa and Broderick, Celso Machado in a magnificent jam with Tounkara's group, and Mick Taylor showing his great chops alongside Sonny Rhodes. Corky Siegel, Taylor, Rhodes, Hakmoun and Roy Forbes closed the festival, a well-run event that offers a fine focus on the blues, and a generous selection of roots musicians from many traditions. Linda Tanaka's musical and organizational smarts have made the Salmon Arm fest into a fun fixture on the summer circuit.

## Tanz&FolkFest Rudolstadt Rudolstadt, Thüringia, Germany 4-6 July 2003

By Ken Hunt (with a little help from his friends, Jörg and Martina Schwinski and Santosh Sidhu)  
Stadtfeste (town festivals) are a time-honoured component of German life. In the case of Tanz&FolkFest (Dance and folk festival) Rudolstadt, the festival takes over the entire town. Over three days, this year's festival occupied fifteen open-air or indoor stages scattered from hill-top castle to river plain park. Here comes the caveat: geography (physical), gout (figurative) and goût (chaconne [sic] à) demand decision-making. Each year the festival runs three thematic programmes alongside its usual festival fare. 2003's national theme was Berlin, the 'Magic Instrument' marimba and the international theme was Kanada. The Canada Council for the Arts sponsored the biggest assembly of Canadian folk/world music acts ever to hit Europe: acts ranging from Tanya Tagaq (fine as a soloist, but missed with Michael Deveau) and Tasa (elevated by Dhruba Ghosh's sarangi playing) to Jorane (missed) to April Verch (crowd-pleasing but personally unengaging). The Canadian 'package' produced one major discovery, however.

Key to TFF RU's uniqueness is artistic director, Bernhard Hanneken's choice of performers. The Czech 'musical magnet' Jiří Plocek expressed the wonder of Hanneken's attractions succinctly to me: Rudolstadt is more than a German event, it is a Central European must-attend. To add a personal note, there is nothing to compare with it in Western Europe, let alone Britain. It is a springboard into the unknown.

With no disrespect to the other

70-odd acts, four musical epiphanies stand out. Adopting the alphabetical. Ambrozijn from Flanders, a quartet of voice, fiddle, guitar and three-row squeeze thing, has deliberately chosen to straddle the national divide by singing in both Flemish and French. Their reverence and irreverence for Belgium's musical traditions poured out in their music, to an extent that has no precedent in Belgian music in my experience. The Canadian discovery was Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer. Their unaccompanied, boot-rhythmed music simply blew me away. Wenzel, both as Hans-Eckert W., and the group of the same name, was pure spectacle. On this occasion the German Liedermacher (songwriter) forewent his trademark whiteface make-up, but not clownery, circus and Kabarett (the harder-edged German variety). In songs like 'Schöner Lügen' (Lie More Beautifully), 'Banane' (Banana) and his Woody Guthrie translation 'Ticky Tock' he achieved a literary and poetic quality that, believe it or not, touched on the numinousness of Goethe and Heine. Lastly, the Faroese and pan-Nordic group Yggdrasil improvised a sound that transcended their exceptional eponymous CD. Even for a boy raised on saxophone, there were bewildering times when it was impossible to tell whether the phrase was coming from their vocalist Eivør Pálsdóttir's larynx or Anders Hagberg's soprano saxophone. That may not sound like much to you. For me to be so thrown so utterly was a first. Four epiphanies at one festival is a lifetime first for me. Evidently it worked for others too: their recordings, like Ambrozijn and the Hellish Coalminers, sold out.





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7 - Friends of Fiddlers' Green  
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14 - Steel Rall (CD Release)  
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(with 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Records)  
28 - Bill Garrett / Sue Lothrop  
(Mariposa)

- October  
5 - Téada  
12 - Frankie Armstrong  
(Mariposa - to be confirmed)  
19 - Martin Carthy  
26 - Harvey Andrews

- November  
2 - Maeve Donnelly  
9 - Fiddlesong  
16 - Eve Goldberg  
23 - (Mariposa - tba)  
30 - Battlefield Band

- December  
7 - tba  
14 - (Mariposa - tba)  
21 - Seasonal Celebration



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Canadian songwriters double bill!

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**Tri Continental** Sat. Nov. 15

**Mae Moore** Fri. Jan. 23, 2004

**Dougie Maclean** Sun. Feb. 29, 2004  
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**Dervish** Sat. Apr. 17, 2004  
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Sat. Nov. 15/03 J.P. Cormier / Tim Hus  
Sat. Dec. 6/03 Jenny Allen + Lionel Rault +  
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Sat. Jan. 17/04 Ron Hynes / Bob Jahrig  
Sat. Feb. 14/04 Karla Anderson + Steve Pineo +  
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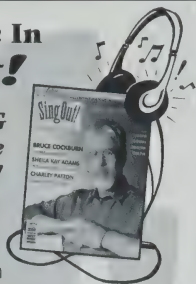
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Print and fill out this registration form and send it, along with your check, to the address indicated. The postmark deadline for reduced-rate conference registration is September 30, 2003. All rates below are in Canadian dollars (US funds are accepted, minus 30%). Early registrations must be postmarked no later than **September 30, 2003**. Day passes are available for Friday, Saturday or Sunday activities. **SPECIAL OFFER!** Those attending the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals ([www.ocff.ca](http://www.ocff.ca)) annual conference in Sudbury, October 17-19 are eligible for an additional \$25 discount on their RendezVous Folk! full conference registration.

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# The Oldest Man in the World

Words and Music  
By Grit Laskin

57

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The Oldest Man In The World: By Grit Laskin

My name Shi ra - li Mis - li - mov I was born in eigh - teen  
It's six thou - sand feet up an al - pine peak whe - re or - chards I must  
Feast at my ban - quet of chicken and beer of bread and cheese a  
Now there's rea - sons that I've lived so long and thus they seem to

five. tend. The old - est man in the world to - day still ve - ry much a -  
fine. A slippery steep path up this moun - tain side I climb at sea - sons  
be Drink I read no books I worry not and I've had no en - e

live. end. One hun - dred and six - ty eight am I and ma - ny more will I  
wine. For me it is on - ly a three hour trek and it winds me not I can  
my. Oh empty your thoughts oh it's we who know, many more ban - quets we - ll  
My orchard still keeps me hard at work and on horse back I st - ill

be. say. were my wife still a - live to - day she'd be as old as  
see. But an average - man one third my age would need near half as  
ride. The west - ern life span of sev - enty I sure - ly have de -

me.  
day.  
try.  
fied.

Penguin Eggs is determined to cultivate and strengthen a national interest in folk music by printing score sheets to exemplary character contemporary songs considered written in a traditional style. Grit Laskin's *The Oldest Man In The World* certainly falls into that category. It can be found on his wonderful double disc *Unabashedly Folk: Songs and Tunes 1979-1985*. Grit very kindly allowed us to print it here. And much thanks to John Minter for transcribing the notes and words.

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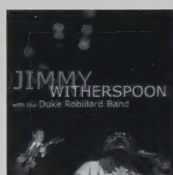
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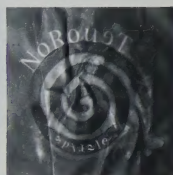
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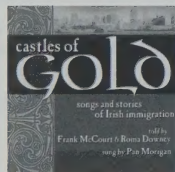
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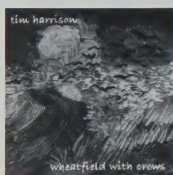
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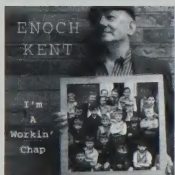
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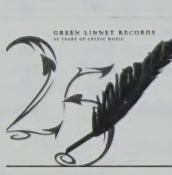
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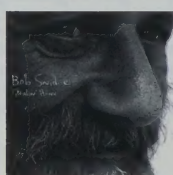
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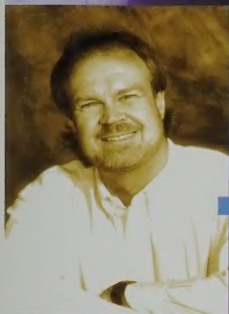
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